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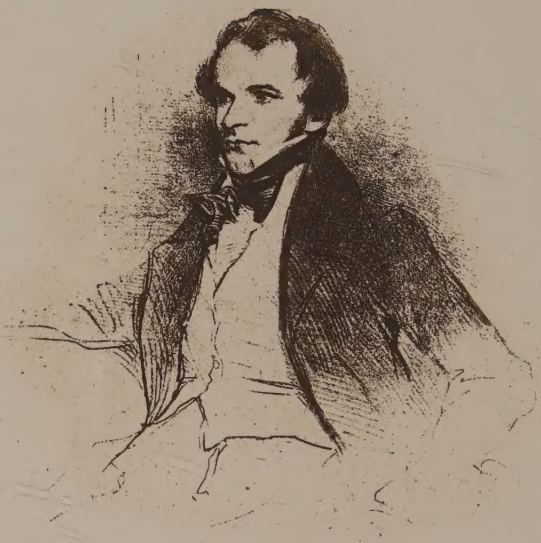

Pr Mérimée

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

COLOMBA
AND
CARMEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY THE LADY MARY LOYD

WITH A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
BY ARTHUR SYMONS

A FRONTISPIECE AND NUMEROUS
OTHER PORTRAITS WITH
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES BY
OCTAVE UZANNE

P. F. COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

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PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

I

STENDHAL has left us a picture of Mérimée as "a young man in a gray frock-coat, very ugly, and with a turned-up nose. . . . This young man had something insolent and extremely unpleasant about him. His eyes, small and without expression, had always the same look, and this look was ill-natured. . . . Such was my first impression of the best of my present friends. I am not too sure of his heart, but I am sure of his talents. It is M. le Comte Gazul, now so well known, and a letter from whom, which came to me last week, made me happy for two days. His mother has a good deal of French wit and a superior intelligence. Like her son, it seems to me that she might give way to emotion once a year." There, painted by a clear-sighted and disinterested friend, is a picture of Mérimée almost from his own point of view, or at least as he would himself have painted the picture. How far is it, in its insistence on the *attendrissement une fois par an*, on the subordination of natural feeling to a somewhat disdainful aloofness, the real Mérimée?

Early in life, Mérimée adopted his theory, fixed his attitude, and to the end of his life he seemed, to those about him, to have walked along the path he had chosen, almost without a deviation. He went to England at the age of twenty-three, to Spain four years later, and might seem to have been drawn naturally to those two countries, to which he was to return so often, by natural affinities of temper and manner. It was the English manner that he liked, that came naturally to him; the correct, unmoved exterior, which is a kind of positive strength, not to be broken by any onslaught of events or emotions; and in Spain he found an equally positive animal acceptance of things as they are, which satisfied his profound, restrained, really Pagan sensuality, Pagan in the hard, eighteenth-century sense. From the beginning he was a student, of art, of history, of human nature, and we find him enjoying, in his deliberate, keen way, the studied diversions of the student; body and soul each kept exactly in its place, each provided for without partiality. He entered upon literature by a mystification, *Le Théâtre de Clara Gazul,* a book of plays supposed to be translated from a living Spanish dramatist; and he followed it by *La Guzla,* another mystification, a book of prose ballads supposed to be translated from the Illyrian. And these mystifications, like the forgeries of Chatterton, contain perhaps the most sincere, the most undisguised emotion which he ever permitted himself to express; so se

cure did he feel of the heart behind the pearl necklace of the *décolletée* Spanish actress, who travesties his own face in the frontispiece to the one, and so remote from himself did he feel the bearded gentleman to be, who sits cross-legged on the ground, holding his lyre or *guzla,* in the frontispiece to the other. Then came a historical novel, the *Chronique du Règne de Charles IX,* before he discovered, as if by accident, precisely what it was he was meant to do: the short story. Then he drifted into history, became Inspector of Ancient Monuments, and helped to save Vézelay, among other good deeds toward art, done in his cold, systematic, after all satisfactory manner. He travelled at almost regular intervals, not only in Spain and England, but in Corsica, in Greece and Asia Minor, in Italy, in Hungary, in Bohemia, usually with a definite, scholarly object, and always with an alert attention to everything that came in his way, to the manners of people, their national characters, their differences from one another. An intimate friend of the Countess de Montijo, the mother of the Empress Eugénie, he was a friend, not a courtier, at the court of the Third Empire. He was elected to the Academy, mainly for his *Études sur l'Histoire Romaine,* a piece of dry history, and immediately scandalized his supporters by publishing a story, *Arsène Guillot,* which was taken for a veiled attack on religion and on morals. Soon after, his imagination seemed to flag; he abandoned himself, perhaps

a little wearily, more and more to facts, to the facts of history and learning; learned Russian, and translated Poushkin and Tourguenieff; and died in 1870, at Cannes, perhaps less satisfied with himself than most men who have done, in their lives, far less exactly what they have intended to do.

"I have theories about the very smallest things—gloves, boots, and the like," says Mérimée in one of his letters; *des idées très-arrêtées*, as he adds with emphasis in another. Precise opinions lead easily to prejudices, and Mérimée, who prided himself on the really very logical quality of his mind, put himself somewhat deliberately into the hands of his prejudices. Thus he hated religion, distrusted priests, would not let himself be carried away by any instinct of admiration, would not let himself do the things which he had the power to do, because his other, critical self came mockingly behind him, suggesting that very few things were altogether worth doing. "There is nothing that I despise and even detest so much as humanity in general," he confesses in a letter; and it is with a certain self-complacency that he defines the only kind of society in which he found himself at home: "(1) With unpretentious people whom I have known a long time; (2) in a Spanish *venta*, with muleteers and peasant women of Andalusia." One day, as he finds himself in a pensive mood, dreaming of a woman, he translates for her some lines of Sophocles, into verse, "English verse, you un-

derstand, for I abhor French verse." The carefulness with which he avoids received opinions shows a certain consciousness of those opinions, which in a more imaginatively independent mind would scarcely have found a place. It is not only for an effect, but more and more genuinely, that he sets his acquirements as a scholar above his accomplishments as an artist. Clearing away, as it seemed to him, every illusion from before his eyes, he forgot the last illusion of positive people: the possibility that one's eyes may be short-sighted.

Mérimée realizes a type which we are accustomed to associate almost exclusively with the eighteenth century, but of which our own time can offer us many obscure examples. It is the type of the *esprit fort*: the learned man, the choice, narrow artist, who is at the same time the cultivated sensualist. To such a man the pursuit of women is part of his constant pursuit of human experience, and of the document, which is the summing up of human experience. To Mérimée history itself was a matter of detail. "In history I care only for anecdotes," he says in the preface to the *Chronique du Règne de Charles IX*. And he adds: "It is not a very noble taste; but, I confess to my shame, I would willingly give Thucydides for the authentic memoirs of Aspasia or of a slave of Pericles; for only memoirs, which are the familiar talk of an author with his reader, afford those portraits of *man* which amuse

and interest me." This curiosity of mankind above all things, and of mankind at home, or in private actions, not necessarily of any import to the general course of the world, leads the curious searcher naturally to the more privately interesting and the less publicly important half of mankind. Not scrupulous in arriving at any end by the most adaptable means, not disturbed by any illusions as to the physical facts of the universe, a sincere and grateful lover of variety, doubtless an amusing companion with those who amused him, Mérimée found much of his entertainment and instruction, at all events in his younger years, in that " half world " which he tells us he frequented " very much out of curiosity, living in it always as in a foreign country." Here, as elsewhere, Mérimée played the part of the amateur. He liked anecdotes, not great events, in his history; and he was careful to avoid any too serious passions in his search for sensations. There, no doubt, for the sensualist, is happiness, if he can resign himself to it. It is only serious passions which make anybody unhappy; and Mérimée was carefully on the lookout against a possible unhappiness. I can imagine him ending every day with satisfaction, and beginning every fresh day with just enough expectancy to be agreeable, at that period of his life when he was writing the finest of his stories, and dividing the rest of his leisure between the drawing-rooms and the pursuit of uneventful adventures.

Only, though we are *automates autant qu'esprit,* as Pascal tells us, it is useless to expect that what is automatic in us should remain invariable and unconditioned. If life could be lived on a plan, and for such men on such a plan, if first impulses and profound passions could be kept entirely out of one's own experience, and studied only at a safe distance, then, no doubt, one could go on being happy, in a not too heroic way. But, with Mérimée as with all the rest of the world, the scheme breaks down one day, just when a reasonable solution to things seems to have been arrived at. Mérimée had already entered on a peaceable enough *liaison* when the first letter came to him from the *Inconnue* to whom he was to write so many letters, for nine years without seeing her, and then for thirty years more after he had met her, the last letter being written but two hours before his death. These letters, which we can now read in two volumes, have a delicately insincere sincerity which makes every letter a work of art, not because he tried to make it so, but because he could not help seeing the form simultaneously with the feeling, and writing genuine love-letters with an excellence almost as impersonal as that of his stories. He begins with curiosity, which passes with singular rapidity into a kind of self-willed passion; already in the eighth letter, long before he has seen her, he is speculating which of the two will know best how to torture the other: that is, as he views it, love best. " We shall never love

one another really," he tells her, as he begins to hope for the contrary. Then he discovers, for the first time, and without practical result, "that it is better to have illusions than to have none at all." He confesses himself to her, sometimes reminding her: "You will never know either all the good or all the evil that I have in me. I have spent my life in being praised for qualities which I do not possess, and calumniated for defects which are not mine." And, with a strange, weary humility, which is the other side of his contempt for most things and people, he admits: "To you I am like an old opera, which you are obliged to forget, in order to see it again with any pleasure." He, who has always distrusted first impulses, finds himself telling her (was she really so like him, or was he arguing with himself?): "You always fear first impulses; do you not see that they are the only ones which are worth anything and which always succeed?" Does he realize, unable to change the temperament which he has partly made for himself, that just there has been his own failure?

Perhaps of all love-letters, these of Mérimée show us love triumphing over the most carefully guarded personality. Here the obstacle is not duty, nor circumstance, nor a rival; but (on her side as on his, it would seem) a carefully trained natural coldness, in which action, and even for the most part feeling, are relinquished to the control of second thoughts. A habit of

repressive irony goes deep: Mérimée might well have thought himself secure against the outbreak of an unconditional passion. Yet here we find passion betraying itself, often only by bitterness, together with a shy, surprising tenderness, in this curious lovers' itinerary, marked out with all the customary sign-posts, and leading, for all its wilful deviations, along the inevitable road.

It is commonly supposed that the artist, by the habit of his profession, has made for himself a sort of cuirass of phrases against the direct attack of emotion, and so will suffer less than most people if he should fall into love, and things should not go altogether well with him. Rather, he is the more laid open to attack, the more helplessly entangled when once the net has been cast over him. He lives through every passionate trouble, not merely with the daily emotions of the crowd, but with the whole of his imagination. Pain is multiplied to him by the force of that faculty by which he conceives delight. What is most torturing in every not quite fortunate love is memory, and the artist becomes an artist by his intensification of memory. Mérimée has himself defined art as exaggeration *à propos*. Well, to the artist his own life is an exaggeration not *à propos*, and every hour dramatizes for him its own pain and pleasure, in a tragic comedy of which he is the author and actor and spectator. The practice of art is a sharpening of the sensations, and, the knife

once sharpened, does it cut into one's hand less deeply because one is in the act of using it to carve wood?

And so we find Mérimée, the most impersonal of artists, and one of those most critical over the caprices and violences of fate, giving in to an almost obvious temptation, an anonymous correspondence, a mysterious unknown woman, and passing from stage to stage of a finally very genuine love-affair, which kept him in a fluttering agitation for more than thirty years. It is curious to note that the little which we know of this *Inconnue* seems to mark her out as the realization of a type which had always been Mérimée's type of woman. She has the " wicked eyes " of all his heroines, from the Mariquita of his first attempt in literature, who haunts the Inquisitor with " her great black eyes, like the eyes of a young cat, soft and wicked at once." He finds her at the end of his life, in a novel of Tourguenieff, " one of those diabolical creatures whose coquetry is the more dangerous because it is capable of passion." Like so many artists, he has invented his ideal before he meets it, and must have seemed almost to have fallen in love with his own creation. It is one of the privileges of art to create nature, as, according to a certain mystical doctrine, you can actualize, by sheer fixity of contemplation, your mental image of a thing into the thing itself. The *Inconnue* was one of a series, the rest imaginary; and her power over Mérimée, we

can hardly doubt, came not only from her queer likeness of temperament to his, but from the singular, flattering pleasure which it must have given him to find that he had invented with so much truth to nature.

II

Mérimée as a writer belongs to the race of Laclos and of Stendhal, a race essentially French; and we find him representing, a little coldly, as it seemed, the claims of mere unimpassioned intellect, at work on passionate problems, among those people of the Romantic period to whom emotion, evident emotion, was everything. In his subjects he is as " Romantic " as Victor Hugo or Gautier; he adds, even, a peculiar flavour of cruelty to the Romantic ingredients. But he distinguishes sharply, as French writers before him had so well known how to do, between the passion one is recounting and the moved or unmoved way in which one chooses to tell it. To Mérimée art was a very formal thing, almost a part of learning; it was a thing to be done with a clear head, reflectively, with a calm mastery of even the most vivid material. While others, at that time, were intoxicating themselves with strange sensations, hoping that " nature would take the pen out of their hands and write," just at the moment when their own thoughts became least coherent, Mérimée went quietly to work over something a little abnormal which he had found in

nature, with as disinterested, as scholarly, as mentally reserved an interest as if it were one of those Gothic monuments which he inspected to such good purpose, and, as it has seemed to his biographer, with so little sympathy. His own emotion, so far as it is roused, seems to him an extraneous thing, a thing to be concealed, if not a little ashamed of. It is the thing itself he wishes to give you, not his feelings about it; and his theory is that if the thing itself can only be made to stand and speak before the reader, the reader will supply for himself all the feeling that is needed, all the feeling that would be called out in nature by a perfectly clear sight of just such passions in action. It seems to him bad art to paint the picture, and to write a description of the picture as well.

And his method serves him wonderfully up to a certain point, and then leaves him, without his being well aware of it, at the moment even when he has convinced himself that he has realized the utmost of his aim. At a time when he had come to consider scholarly dexterity as the most important part of art, Mérimée tells us that *La Vénus d'Ille* seemed to him the best story he had ever written. He has often been taken at his word, but to take him at his word is to do him an injustice. *La Vénus d'Ille* is a modern setting of the old story of the Ring given to Venus, and Mérimée has been praised for the ingenuity with which he has obtained an effect of supernatural terror, while leaving the

way open for a material explanation of the supernatural. What he has really done is to materialize a myth, by accepting in it precisely what might be a mere superstition, the form of the thing, and leaving out the spiritual meaning of which that form was no more than a temporary expression. The ring which the bridegroom sets on the finger of Venus, and which the statue's finger closes upon, accepting it, symbolizes the pact between love and sensuality, the lover's abdication of all but the physical part of love; and the statue taking its place between husband and wife on the marriage-night, and crushing life out of him in an inexorable embrace, symbolizes the merely natural destruction which that granted prayer brings with it, as a merely human Messalina takes her lover on his own terms, in his abandonment of all to Venus. Mérimée sees a cruel and fantastic superstition, which he is afraid of seeming to take too seriously, which he prefers to leave as a story of ghosts or bogies, a thing at which we are to shiver as at a mere twitch on the nerves, while our mental confidence in the impossibility of what we can not explain is preserved for us by a hint at a muleteer's vengeance. "Have I frightened you?" says the man of the world, with a reassuring smile. "Think about it no more; I really meant nothing."

And yet, does he after all mean nothing? The devil, the old Pagan gods, the spirits of evil incarnated under every form, fascinated him; it gave him a malign pleas-

ure to set them at their evil work among men, while, all the time, he mocks them and the men who believed in them. He is a materialist, and yet he believes in at least a something evil, outside the world, or in the heart of it, which sets humanity at its strange games, relentlessly. Even then he will not surrender his doubts, his ironies, his negations. Is he, perhaps, at times, the atheist who fears that, after all, God may exist, or at least who realizes how much he would fear him if he did exist?

Mérimée had always delighted in mystifications; he was always on his guard against being mystified himself, either by nature or by his fellow-creatures. In the early "Romantic" days he had had a genuine passion for various things: "local colour," for instance. But even then he had invented it by a kind of trick, and, later on, he explains what a poor thing "local colour" is, since it can so easily be invented without leaving one's study. He is full of curiosity, and will go far to satisfy it, regretting "the decadence," in our times, "of energetic passions, in favour of tranquillity and perhaps of happiness." These energetic passions he will find, indeed, in our own times, in Corsica, in Spain, in Lithuania, really in the midst of a very genuine and profoundedly studied "local colour," and also, under many disguises, in Parisian drawing-rooms. Mérimée prized happiness, material comfort, the satisfaction of one's immediate desires, very highly, and it was his

keen sense of life, of the pleasures of living, that gave him some of his keenness in the realization of violent death, physical pain, whatever disturbs the equilibrium of things with unusual emphasis. Himself really selfish, he can distinguish the unhappiness of others with a kind of intuition which is not sympathy, but which selfish people often have: a dramatic consciousness of how painful pain must be, whoever feels it. It is not pity, though it communicates itself to us, often enough, as pity. It is the clear-sighted sensitiveness of a man who watches human things closely, bringing them home to himself with the deliberate, essaying art of an actor who has to represent a particular passion in movement.

And always in Mérimée there is this union of curiosity with indifference: the curiosity of the student, the indifference of the man of the world. Indifference, in him, as in the man of the world, is partly an attitude, adopted for its form, and influencing the temperament just so much as gesture always influences emotion. The man who forces himself to appear calm under excitement teaches his nerves to follow instinctively the way he has shown them. In time he will not merely seem calm but will be calm, at the moment when he learns that a great disaster has befallen him. But, in Mérimée, was the indifference even as external as it must always be when there is restraint, when, therefore, there is something to restrain? Was there not in him

a certain drying up of the sources of emotion, as the man of the world came to accept almost the point of view of society, reading his stories to a little circle of court ladies, when, once in a while, he permitted himself to write a story? And was not this increase of well-bred indifference, now more than ever characteristic, almost the man himself, the chief reason why he abandoned art so early, writing only two or three short stories during the last twenty-five years of his life, and writing these with a labour which by no means conceals itself?

Mérimée had an abstract interest in, almost an enthusiasm for, facts; facts for their meaning, the light they throw on psychology. He declines to consider psychology except through its expression in facts, with an impersonality far more real than that of Flaubert. The document, historical or social, must translate itself into sharp action before he can use it; not that he does not see, and appreciate better than most others, all there is of significance in the document itself; but his theory of art is inexorable. He never allowed himself to write as he pleased, but he wrote always as he considered the artist should write. Thus he made for himself a kind of formula, confining himself, as some thought, within too narrow limits, but, to himself, doing exactly what he set himself to do, with all the satisfaction of one who is convinced of the justice of his aim and confident of his power to attain it.

Look, for instance, at his longest, far from his best work, *La Chronique du Règne de Charles IX.* Like so much of his work, it has something of the air of a *tour de force*, not taken up entirely for its own sake. Mérimée drops into a fashion, half deprecatingly, as if he sees through it, and yet, as with merely mundane elegance, with a resolve to be more scrupulously exact than its devotees. "Belief," says some one in this book, as if speaking for Mérimée, "is a precious gift which has been denied me." Well, he will do better, without belief, than those who believe. Written under a title which suggests a work of actual history, it is more than possible that the first suggestion of this book really came, as he tells us in the preface, from the reading of "a large number of memoirs and pamphlets relating to the end of the sixteenth century." "I wished to make an epitome of my reading," he tells us, "and here is the epitome." The historical problem attracted him; that never quite explicable Massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which there was precisely the violence of action and uncertainty of motive which he liked to set before him at the beginning of a task in literature. Probable, clearly defined people, in the dress of the period, grew up naturally about this central motive; humour and irony have their part; there are adventures, told with a sword's point of sharpness, and in the fewest possible words; there is one of his cruel and loving women, in whom every sentiment becomes

action, by some twisted feminine logic of their own. It is the most artistic, the most clean-cut, of historical novels; and yet this perfect neatness of method suggests a certain indifference on the part of the writer, as if he were more interested in doing the thing well than in doing it.

And that, in all but the very best of his stories (even, perhaps, in *Arsène Guillot*, only not in such perfect things as *Carmen*, as *Mateo Falcone*) is what Mérimée just lets us see, underneath an almost faultless skill of narrative. An incident told by Mérimée at his best gathers about it something of the gravity of history; the composed way in which it is told helping to give it the equivalent of remoteness, allowing it not merely to be, but, what is more difficult, to seem, classic in its own time. "Magnificent things, things after my own heart—that is to say, Greek in their truth and simplicity," he writes in a letter, referring to the tales of Poushkin. The phrase is scarcely too strong to apply to what is best in his own work. Made out of elemental passions, hard, cruel, detached as it were from their own sentiments, the stories that he tells might in other hands become melodramas; *Carmen*, taken thoughtlessly out of his hands, has supplied the libretto to the most popular of modern light operas. And yet, in his severe method of telling, mere outlines, it seems, told with an even stricter watch over what is significantly left out than over what is briefly allowed to be

said in words, these stories sum up little separate pieces of the world, each a little world in itself. And each is a little world which he has made his own, with a labour at last its own reward, and taking life partly because he has put into it more of himself than the mere intention of doing it well. Mérimée loved Spain, and *Carmen*, which by some caprice of popularity is the symbol of Spain to people in general, is really, to those who know Spain well, the most Spanish thing that has been written since *Gil Blas*. All the little parade of local colour and philology, the appendix on the *Calo* of the gipsies, done to heighten the illusion, has more significance than people sometimes think. In this story all the qualities of Mérimée come into agreement; the student of human passions, the traveller, the observer, the learned man, meet in harmony; and, in addition, there is the *aficionado*, the true *amateur*, in love with Spain and the Spaniards.

It is significant that in the reception of Mérimée at the Académie Française in 1845, M. Étienne thought it already needful to say: "Do not pause in the midst of your career; rest is not permitted to your talent." Already Mérimée was giving way to facts, to facts in themselves, as they come into history, into records of scholarship. We find him writing, a little dryly, on Catiline, on Cæsar, on Don Pedro the Cruel, learning Russian, and translating from it (yet, while studying the Russians before all the world, never discovering the

mystical Russian soul), writing learned articles, writing reports. He looked around on contemporary literature, and found nothing that he could care for. Stendhal was gone, and who else was there to admire? Flaubert, it seemed to him, was "wasting his talent under the pretence of realism." Victor Hugo was "a fellow with the most beautiful figures of speech at his disposal," who did not take the trouble to think, but intoxicated himself with his own words. Baudelaire made him furious, Renan filled him with pitying scorn. In the midst of his contempt, he may perhaps have imagined that he was being left behind. For whatever reason, weakness or strength, he could not persuade himself that it was worth while to strive for anything any more. He died probably at the moment when he was no longer a fashion, and had not yet become a classic.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

LIFE OF MÉRIMÉE

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE *was the son of Jean François Léonor Mérimée, a painter and historian of art, and Anna Moreau, his wife, who also was a painter; he was born on the 28th of September, 1803, in Paris. He was brought up a dandy and an Anglomaniac; Hazlitt was the intimate friend of his parents. At college Mérimée was not brilliant as a scholar, and it was not until he reached his twenty-second year that he began to turn to intellectual pursuits. A few months later he took his place in the innermost circle of literary life in Paris. About 1825 he became the friend of Stendhal, whose genius and temperament exercised a strong influence upon Mérimée. The latter was now writing the series of five romantic plays, which he presently published together, pretending that they were translated from an imaginary Spanish dramatist, Clara Gazul; of these, one, "The Spaniards in Denmark," possesses real merit; the others are of a juvenile extravagance. Mérimée's second work, the "Guzla" of 1827, was also a mystification, for this pretended to be a collection of Illyrian folk-songs. In 1828 he published a sort of chronicle-play, the "Jacquerie," and in 1829 his earliest novel, the "Chronique du temps de Charles IX," with which latter, for the first time, Mérimée enjoyed a considerable success. In "Charles IX" he imi-*

tated, with closer success than any other French romancer has done, the historical manner of Sir Walter Scott. In 1829 he composed three of the most interesting of his early short stories—"Le Vase Étrusque," "L'Enlèvement de la Redoute," and "Mateo Falcone." In 1830 he travelled in Spain, and, on his return to Paris, entered the Civil Service; he was moved from department to department until at length he found the place which exactly suited him in the Fine Arts Section of the Home Office. His life for the few next years was dissipated and cynical; he wrote little, and that little not his best. "La Double Méprise," not a very characteristic story, is almost the only literary product of this period. But in 1835 Mérimée was appointed Inspector General of Historic Monuments in France, and in the course of the next year he formed his life-long friendship with the Countess of Montijo; these two events greatly added to the serious interests of his life. In 1836 he began that mysterious correspondence with the "Unknown," which has, since his death, been read with so acute an interest. Four of Mérimée's most celebrated works belong to the years immediately subsequent—"Vénus d'Ille" to 1837, "Colomba" to 1840, "Arsène Guillot" to 1844, and "Carmen" to 1845. Of these, "Colomba" was written during a journey Mérimée undertook in Corsica. His fame was now wide, but not universal, he had many enemies; in 1844 he was elected a member of the French Academy after stormy scenes and by a narrow majority. As Inspector of Monuments, Mérimée travelled for years through the length and breadth of France, and his services to art and archæology were invaluable. He published long and laborious historical works,

which are no longer widely remembered. In 1853 the Emperor Napoleon III married Eugénie, the daughter of Mérimée's intimate and old friend, Madame de Montijo, and the novelist became closely attached to the court of the Tuileries; he was even employed on diplomatic work of a particularly delicate kind. He wrote little of an imaginative nature during the last years of his life, the short story called "Lokis" (1869) being the principal exception. Mérimée settled at Cannes, where he died on the 13th of September, 1870. To the great surprise of his friends, it was found that he had become a Protestant in his last brief illness. The posthumous publication of his extremely beautiful and original letters to two "unknown" ladies and to Panizzi did much to keep alive and to refresh the memory of Prosper Mérimée.

E. G.

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COLOMBA

CHAPTER I

"Pè far la to vendetta,
Sta sigur', vasta anche ella."
—*Vocero du Niolo.*

EARLY in the month of October, 181–, Colonel Sir Thomas Nevil, a distinguished Irish officer of the English army, alighted with his daughter at the Hôtel Beauveau, Marseilles, on their return from a tour in Italy. The perpetual and universal admiration of enthusiastic travellers has produced a sort of reaction, and many tourists, in their desire to appear singular, now take the *nil admirari* of Horace for their motto. To this dissatisfied class the colonel's only daughter, Miss Lydia, belonged. "The Transfiguration" had seemed to her mediocre, and Vesuvius in eruption an effect not greatly superior to that produced by the Birmingham factory chimneys. Her great objection to Italy, on the whole, was its lack of local colour and character. My readers must discover the sense of these expressions as best they may. A few years ago I understood them very well myself, but at the present time I can make nothing of them. At first, Miss Lydia had flattered herself she had found things on the other side of the Alps

which nobody had ever before seen, about which she could converse *avec les honnêtes gens,* as M. Jourdain calls them. But soon, anticipated in every direction by her countrymen, she despaired of making any fresh discoveries, and went over to the party of the opposition. It is really very tiresome not to be able to talk about the wonders of Italy without hearing somebody say "Of course you know the Raphael in the Palazzo —— at ——? It is the finest thing in Italy!" and just the thing *you* happen to have overlooked! As it would take too long to see everything, the simplest course is to resort to deliberate and universal censure.

At the Hôtel Beauveau Miss Lydia met with a bitter disappointment. She had brought back a pretty sketch of the Pelasgic or Cyclopean Gate at Segni, which, as she believed, all other artists had completely overlooked. Now, at Marseilles, she met Lady Frances Fenwick, who showed her her album, in which appeared, between a sonnet and a dried flower, the very gate in question, brilliantly touched in with sienna. Miss Lydia gave her drawing to her maid—and lost all admiration for Pelasgic structures.

This unhappy frame of mind was shared by Colonel Nevil, who, since the death of his wife, looked at everything through his daughter's eyes. In his estimation, Italy had committed the unpardonable sin of boring his child, and was, in consequence, the most wearisome country on the face of the earth. He had no fault to find, indeed, with the pictures and statues, but he was in a position to assert that Italian sport was ut-

terly wretched, and that he had been obliged to tramp ten leagues over the Roman Campagna, under a burning sun, to kill a few worthless red-legged partridges.

The morning after his arrival at Marseilles he invited Captain Ellis—his former adjutant, who had just been spending six weeks in Corsica—to dine with him. The captain told Miss Lydia a story about bandits, which had the advantage of bearing no resemblance to the robber tales with which she had been so frequently regaled, on the road between Naples and Rome, and he told it well. At dessert, the two men, left alone over their claret, talked of hunting—and the colonel learned that nowhere is there more excellent sport, or game more varied and abundant, than in Corsica. "There are plenty of wild boars," said Captain Ellis. "And you have to learn to distinguish them from the domestic pigs, which are astonishingly like them. For if you kill a pig, you find yourself in difficulties with the swine-herds. They rush out of the thickets (which they call *mâquis*) armed to the teeth, make you pay for their beasts, and laugh at you besides. Then there is the mouflon, a strange animal, which you will not find anywhere else—splendid game, but hard to get—and stags, deer, pheasants, and partridges—it would be impossible to enumerate all the kinds with which Corsica swarms. If you want shooting, colonel, go to Corsica! There, as one of my entertainers said to me, you can get a shot at every imaginable kind of game, from a thrush to a man!"

At tea, the captain once more delighted Lydia with the tale of a *vendetta transversale*,* even more strange than his first story, and he thoroughly stirred her enthusiasm by his descriptions of the strange wild beauty of the country, the peculiarities of its inhabitants, and their primitive hospitality and customs. Finally, he offered her a pretty little stiletto, less remarkable for its shape and copper mounting than for its origin. A famous bandit had given it to Captain Ellis, and had assured him it had been buried in four human bodies. Miss Lydia thrust it through her girdle, laid it on the table beside her bed, and unsheathed it twice over before she fell asleep. Her father meanwhile was dreaming he had slain a mouflon, and that its owner insisted on his paying for it, a demand to which he gladly acceded, seeing it was a most curious creature, like a boar, with stag's horns and a pheasant's tail.

"Ellis tells me there's splendid shooting in Corsica," said the colonel, as he sat at breakfast, alone with his daughter. "If it hadn't been for the distance, I should like to spend a fortnight there."

"Well," replied Miss Lydia, "why shouldn't we go to Corsica? While you are hunting I can sketch—I should love to have that grotto Captain Ellis talked about, where Napoleon used to go and study when he was a child, in my album."

It was the first time, probably, that any wish expressed by the colonel had won his daughter's approba-

* A vendetta in which vengeance falls on a more or less distant relation of the author of the original offence.

tion. Delighted as he was by this unexpected harmony on their opinions, he was nevertheless wise enough to put forward various objections, calculated to sharpen Miss Lydia's welcome whim. In vain did he dwell on the wildness of the counrty, and the difficulties of travel there for a lady. Nothing frightened her; she liked travelling on horseback of all things; she delighted in the idea of bivoucking in the open; she even threatened to go as far as Asia Minor—in short, she found an answer to everything. No Englishwoman had ever been to Corsica; therefore she must go. What a pleasure it would be, when she got back to St. James's Place, to exhibit her album! "But, my dear creature, why do you pass over that delightful drawing?" "That's only a trifle—just a sketch I made of a famous Corsican bandit who was our guide." "What! you don't mean to say you have been to Corsica?"

As there were no steamboats between France and Corsica, in those days, inquiries were made for some ship about to sail for the island Miss Lydia proposed to discover. That very day the colonel wrote to Paris, to countermand his order for the suite of apartments in which he was to have made some stay, and bargained with the skipper of a Corsican schooner, just about to set sail for Ajaccio, for two poor cabins, but the best that could be had. Provisions were sent on board, the skipper swore that one of his sailors was an excellent cook, and had not his equal for *bouilleabaisse* ; he promised mademoiselle should be comfortable, and have a fair wind and a calm sea.

The colonel further stipulated, in obedience to his daughter's wishes, that no other passenger should be taken on board, and that the captain should skirt the coast of the island, so that Miss Lydia might enjoy the view of the mountains.

CHAPTER II

On the day of their departure everything was packed and sent on board early in the morning. The schooner was to sail with the evening breeze. Meanwhile, as the colonel and his daughter were walking on the Canebière, the skipper addressed them, and craved permission to take on board one of his relations, his eldest son's godfather's second cousin, who was going back to Corsica, his native country, on important business, and could not find any ship to take him over.

"He's a charming fellow," added Captain Mattei, "a soldier, an officer in the Infantry of the Guard, and would have been a colonel already if *the other* [meaning Napoleon] had still been emperor!"

"As he is a soldier," began the colonel—he was about to add, "I shall be very glad he should come with us," when Miss Lydia exclaimed in English:

"An infantry officer!" (Her father had been in the cavalry, and she consequently looked down on every other branch of the service.) "An uneducated man, very likely, who would be sea-sick, and spoil all the pleasure of our trip!"

The captain did not understand a word of English, but he seemed to catch what Miss Lydia was saying

by the pursing up of her pretty mouth, and immediately entered upon an elaborate panegyric of his relative, which he wound up by declaring him to be a gentleman, belonging to a family of *corporals*, and that he would not be in the very least in the colonel's way, for that he, the skipper, would undertake to stow him in some corner, where they should not be aware of his presence.

The colonel and Miss Nevil thought it peculiar that there should be Corsican families in which the dignity of corporal was handed down from father to son. But, as they really believed the individual in question to be some infantry corporal, they concluded he was some poor devil whom the skipper desired to take out of pure charity. If he had been an officer, they would have been obliged to speak to him and live with him; but there was no reason why they should put themselves out for a corporal—who is a person of no consequence unless his detachment is also at hand, with bayonets fixed, ready to convey a person to a place to which he would rather not be taken.

"Is your kinsman ever sea-sick?" demanded Miss Nevil sharply.

"Never, mademoiselle, he is as steady as a rock, either on sea or land!"

"Very good then, you can take him," said she.

"You can take him!" echoed the colonel, and they passed on their way.

Toward five o'clock in the evening Captain Mattei came to escort them on board the schooner. On the

jetty, near the captain's gig, they met a tall young man wearing a blue frock-coat, buttoned up to his chin; his face was tanned, his eyes were black, brilliant, wide open, his whole appearance intelligent and frank. His shoulders, well thrown back, and his little twisted mustache clearly revealed the soldier—for at that period mustaches were by no means common, and the National Guard had not carried the habits and appearance of the guard-room into the bosom of every family.

When the young man saw the colonel he doffed his cap, and thanked him in excellent language, and without the slightest shyness, for the service he was rendering him.

"Delighted to be of use to you, my good fellow!" said the colonel, with a friendly nod, and he stepped into the gig.

"He's not very ceremonious, this Englishman of yours," said the young man in Italian, and in an undertone, to the captain.

The skipper laid his forefinger under his left eye, and pulled down the corners of his mouth. To a man acquainted with the language of signs, this meant that the Englishman understood Italian, and was an oddity into the bargain. The young man smiled slightly and touched his forehead, in answer to Mattei's sign, as though to indicate that every Englishman had a bee in his bonnet. Then he sat down beside them, and began to look very attentively, though not impertinently, at his pretty fellow-traveller.

"These French soldiers all have a good appear-

ance," remarked the colonel in English to his daughter, "and so it is easy to turn them into officers." Then addressing the young man in French, he said, "Tell me, my good man, what regiment have you served in?" The young man nudged his second cousin's godson's father gently with his elbow, and suppressing an ironic smile, replied that he had served in the Infantry of the Guard, and that he had just quitted the Seventh Regiment of Light Infantry.

"Were you at Waterloo? You are very young!"

"I beg your pardon, colonel, that was my only campaign."

"It counts as two," said the colonel.

The young Corsican bit his lips.

"Papa," said Miss Lydia in English, "do ask him if the Corsicans are very fond of their Buonaparte."

Before the colonel could translate her question into French, the young man answered in fairly good English, though with a marked accent:

"You know, mademoiselle, that no man is ever a prophet in his own country. We, who are Napoleon's fellow-countrymen, are perhaps less attached to him than the French. As for myself, though my family was formerly at enmity with his, I both love and admire him."

"You speak English!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Very ill, as you may perceive!"

Miss Lydia, though somewhat shocked by the young man's easy tone, could not help laughing at the idea of a personal enmity between a corporal and an em-

peror. She took this as a foretaste of Corsican peculiarities, and made up her mind to note it down in her journal.

"Perhaps you were a prisoner in England?" asked the colonel.

"No, colonel, I learned English in France, when I was very young, from a prisoner of your nation."

Then, addressing Miss Nevil:

"Mattei tells me you have just come back from Italy. No doubt, mademoiselle, you speak the purest Tuscan—I fear you'll find it somewhat difficult to understand our dialect."

"My daughter understands every Italian dialect," said the colonel. "She has the gift of languages. She doesn't get it from me."

"Would mademoiselle understand, for instance, these lines from one of our Corsican songs in which a shepherd says to his shepherdess:

"S'entrassi 'ndru paradisu santu, santu,
E nun truvassi a tia, mi n'esciria." *

Miss Lydia did understand. She thought the quotation bold, and the look which accompanied it still bolder, and replied, with a blush, "Capisco."

"And are you going back to your own country on furlough?" inquired the colonel.

"No, colonel, they have put me on half pay, because I was at Waterloo, probably, and because I am

* "If I entered the holy land of paradise and found thee not, I would depart!"—*Serenata di Zicavo.*

Napoleon's fellow-countryman. I am going home, as the song says, low in hope and low in purse," and he looked up to the sky and sighed.

The colonel slipped his hand into his pocket, and tried to think of some civil phrase with which he might slip the gold coin he was fingering into the palm of his unfortunate enemy.

" And I too," he said good-humouredly, " have been put on half pay, but your half pay can hardly give you enough to buy tobacco! Here, corporal! " and he tried to force the gold coin into the young man's closed hand, which rested on the gunwale of the gig.

The young Corsican reddened, drew himself up, bit his lips, and seemed, for a moment, on the brink of some angry reply. Then suddenly his expression changed and he burst out laughing. The colonel, grasping his gold piece still in his hand, sat staring at him.

" Colonel," said the young man, when he had recovered his gravity, " allow me to offer you two pieces of advice—the first is never to offer money to a Corsican, for some of my fellow-countrymen would be rude enough to throw it back in your face; the second is not to give people titles they do not claim. You call me ' corporal,' and I am a lieutenant—the difference is not very great, no doubt, still——"

" Lieutenant! lieutenant! " exclaimed Sir Thomas. " But the skipper told me you were a corporal, and that your father and all your family had been corporals before you! "

At these words the young man threw himself back and laughed louder than ever, so merrily that the skipper and his two sailors joined the chorus.

"Forgive me, colonel!" he cried at last. "The mistake is so comical, and I have only just realized it. It is quite true that my family glories in the fact that it can reckon many corporals among its ancestors—but our Corsican corporals never wore stripes upon their sleeves! Toward the year of grace 1100 certain villages revolted against the tyranny of the great mountain nobles, and chose leaders of their own, whom they called *corporals*. In our island we think a great deal of being descended from these tribunes."

"I beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed the colonel, "I beg your pardon a thousand times! As you understand the cause of my mistake, I hope you will do me the kindness of forgiving it!" and he held out his hand.

"It is the just punishment of my petty pride," said the young man, still laughing, and cordially shaking the Englishman's hand. "I am not at all offended. As my friend Mattei has introduced me so unsuccessfully, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Orso della Rebbia; I am a lieutenant on half pay; and if, as the sight of those two fine dogs of yours leads me to believe, you are coming to Corsica to hunt, I shall be very proud to do you the honours of our mountains and our *mâquis*—if, indeed, I have not forgotten them altogether!" he added, with a sigh.

At this moment the gig came alongside the schooner, the lieutenant offered his hand to Miss Lydia,

and then helped the colonel to swing himself up on deck. Once there, Sir Thomas, who was still very much ashamed of his blunder, and at a loss to know what he had better do to make a man whose ancestry dated from the year 1100 forget it, invited him to supper, without waiting for his daughter's consent, and with many fresh apologies and handshakes. Miss Lydia frowned a little, but, after all, she was not sorry to know what a corporal really was. She rather liked her guest, and was even beginning to fancy there was something aristocratic about him—only she thought him too frank and merry for a hero of romance.

"Lieutenant della Rebbia," said the colonel, bowing to him, English fashion, over a glass of Madeira, "I met a great many of your countrymen in Spain—they were splendid sharp-shooters."

"Yes, and a great many of them have stayed in Spain," replied the young lieutenant gravely.

"I shall never forget the behaviour of a Corsican battalion at the Battle of Vittoria," said the colonel; "I have good reason to remember it, indeed," he added, rubbing his chest. "All day long they had been skirmishing in the gardens, behind the hedges, and had killed I don't know how many of our horses and men. When the retreat was sounded, they rallied and made off at a great pace. We had hoped to take our revenge on them in the open plain, but the scoundrels—I beg your pardon, lieutenant; the brave fellows, I should have said—had formed a square, and there was no breaking it. In the middle of the square—I fancy I can see him still

—rode an officer on a little black horse. He kept close beside the standard, smoking his cigar as coolly as if he had been in a *café*. Every now and then their bugles played a flourish, as if to defy us. I sent my two leading squadrons at them. Whew! instead of breaking the front of the square, my dragoons passed along the sides, wheeled, and came back in great disorder, and with several riderless horses—and all the time those cursed bugles went on playing. When the smoke which had hung over the battalion cleared away, I saw the officer still puffing at his cigar beside his eagle. I was furious, and led a final charge myself. Their muskets, foul with continual firing, would not go off, but the men had drawn up, six deep, with their bayonets pointed at the noses of our horses; you might have taken them for a wall. I was shouting, urging on my dragoons, and spurring my horse forward, when the officer I have mentioned, at length throwing away his cigar, pointed me out to one of his men, and I heard him say something like "*Al capello bianco!*"—I wore a white plume. Then I did not hear any more, for a bullet passed through my chest. That was a splendid battalion, M. della Rebbia, that first battalion of the Eighteenth—all of them Corsicans, as I was afterward told!"

"Yes," said Orso, whose eyes had shone as he listened to the story. "They covered the retreat, and brought back their eagle. Two thirds of those brave fellows are sleeping now on the plains of Vittoria!"

"And, perhaps, you can tell me the name of the officer in command?"

"It was my father—he was then a major in the Eighteenth, and was promoted colonel for his conduct on that terrible day."

"Your father! Upon my word, he was a brave man! I should be glad to see him again, and I am certain I should recognise him. Is he still alive?"

"No, colonel," said the young man, turning slightly pale.

"Was he at Waterloo?"

"Yes, colonel; but he had not the happiness of dying on the field of battle. He died in Corsica two years ago. How beautiful the sea is! It is ten years since I have seen the Mediterranean! Don't you think the Mediterranean much more beautiful than the ocean, mademoiselle?"

"I think it too blue, and its waves lack grandeur."

"You like wild beauty then, mademoiselle! In that case, I am sure you will be delighted with Corsica."

"My daughter," said the colonel, "delights in everything that is out of the common, and for that reason she did not care much for Italy."

"The only place in Italy that I know," said Orso, "is Pisa, where I was at school for some time. But I can not think, without admiration, of the Campo-Santo, the Duomo, and the Leaning Tower—especially of the Campo-Santo. Do you remember Orcagna's 'Death'? I think I could draw every line of it—it is so graven on my memory."

Miss Lydia was afraid the lieutenant was going to deliver an enthusiastic tirade.

"It is very pretty," she said, with a yawn. "Excuse me, papa, my head aches a little; I am going down to my cabin."

She kissed her father on the forehead, inclined her head majestically to Orso, and disappeared. Then the two men talked about hunting and war. They discovered that at Waterloo they had been posted opposite each other, and had no doubt exchanged many a bullet. This knowledge strengthened their good understanding. Turn about, they criticised Napoleon, Wellington, and Blücher, and then they hunted buck, boar, and mountain sheep in company. At last, when night was far advanced, and the last bottle of claret had been emptied, the colonel wrung the lieutenant's hand once more and wished him good-night, expressing his hope that an acquaintance, which had begun in such ridiculous fashion, might be continued. They parted, and each went to bed.

CHAPTER III

It was a lovely night. The moonlight was dancing on the waves, the ship glided smoothly on before a gentle breeze. Miss Lydia was not sleepy, and nothing but the presence of an unpoetical person had prevented her from enjoying those emotions which every human being possessing a touch of poetry must experience at sea by moonlight. When she felt sure the young lieutenant must be sound asleep, like the prosaic creature he was, she got up, took her cloak, woke her maid, and went on deck. Nobody was to be seen except the sailor at the helm, who was singing a sort of dirge in the Corsican dialect, to some wild and monotonous tune. In the silence of the night this strange music had its charm. Unluckily Miss Lydia did not understand perfectly what the sailor was singing. Amid a good deal that was commonplace, a passionate line would occasionally excite her liveliest curiosity. But just at the most important moment some words of *patois* would occur, the sense of which utterly escaped her. Yet she did make out that the subject was connected with a murder. Curses against the assassin, threats of vengeance, praise of the dead were all mingled confusedly. She remembered some of the lines. I will endeavour to translate them here.

. . . " Neither cannon nor bayonets . . .
Brought pallor to his brow. . . .
As serene on the battlefield . . . as a summer sky.
He was the falcon—the eagle's friend . . .
Honey of the sand to his friends . . .
To his enemies, a tempestuous sea. . . .
. . . Prouder than the sun . . . gentler than the moon
. . . He for whom the enemies of France . . .
never waited . . . Murderers in his own land
. . . struck him from behind . . .
As Vittolo slew Sampiero Corso . . .*
Never would they have dared to look him in
the face . . . Set up on the wall
before my bed . . . my well-earned cross of honour
. . . red is its ribbon . . . redder is my
shirt ! . . . For my son, my son in a far country
. . . keep my cross and my blood-stained shirt ! . . .
. . . He will see two holes in it . . . For each
hole, a hole in another shirt ! . . . But will that accomplish
the vengeance ? . . . I must have the hand
that fired, the eye that aimed . . . the heart
that planned ! " . . .

Suddenly the sailor stopped short.

" Why don't you go on, my good man? " inquired Miss Nevil.

The sailor, with a jerk of his head, pointed to a figure appearing through the main hatchway of the schooner: it was Orso, coming up to enjoy the moonlight. " Pray finish your song," said Miss Lydia. " It interests me greatly! "

The sailor leaned toward her, and said, in a very low tone, " I don't give the *rimbecco* to anybody! "

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* See Filippini, Book XI. The name of Vittolo is still execrated in Corsica. At the present day it is synonymous with the word " traitor."

"The what?"

The sailor, without replying, began to whistle.

"I have caught you admiring our Mediterranean, Miss Nevil," said Orso, coming toward her. "You must allow you never see a moon like this anywhere else!"

"I was not looking at it, I was altogether occupied in studying Corsican. That sailor, who has been singing a most tragic dirge, stopped short at the most interesting point."

The sailor bent down, as if to see the compass more clearly, and tugged sharply at Miss Nevil's fur cloak. It was quite evident his lament could not be sung before Lieutenant Orso.

"What were you singing, Paolo Francè?" said Orso. "Was it a *ballata* or a *vocero?* * Mademoiselle understands you, and would like to hear the end."

"I have forgotten it, Ors' Anton'," said the sailor.

And instantly he began a hymn to the Virgin, at the top of his voice.

Miss Lydia listened absent-mindedly to the hymn,

* When a man is dead, and more particularly when he has been murdered, his body is laid out upon a table, and the women of his family, or, failing them, of his friends' families, or even strangers, known for their poetic talent, improvise laments in verse, in the dialect of the country, before a numerous audience. These women are called *voceratrici* or, according to the Corsican pronunciation, *buceratrici*, and the dirge is called *vocero*, *buceru*, or *buceratu*, on the eastern coast, and *ballata* on the western. The word *vocero*, together with its derivatives *vocerar* and *voceratrice*, comes from the Latin word *vociferare*. Occasionally several women take turns at improvising, and often the wife or daughter of the dead man sings the funeral lament herself.

and did not press the singer any further—though she was quite resolved, in her own mind, to find out the meaning of the riddle later. But her maid, who, being a Florentine, could not understand the Corsican dialect any better than her mistress, was as eager as Miss Lydia for information, and, turning to Orso, before the English lady could warn her by a nudge, she said: "Captain, what does *giving the rimbecco* mean?" *

"The rimbecco!" said Orso. "Why, it's the most deadly insult that can be offered to a Corsican. It means reproaching him with not having avenged his wrong. Who mentioned the rimbecco to you?"

"Yesterday, at Marseilles," replied Miss Lydia hurriedly, "the captain of the schooner used the word."

"And whom was he talking about?" inquired Orso eagerly.

"Oh, he was telling us some old story about the time—yes, I think it was about Vannina d'Ornano."

"I suppose, mademoiselle, that Vannina's death has not inspired you with any great love for our national hero, the brave Sampiero?"

"But do you think his conduct was so very heroic?"

"The excuse for his crime lies in the savage cus-

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* The Italian word *rimbeccare* signifies "to send back," "to rejoin," "to throw back." In the Corsican dialect it means to address to any one a public and insulting reproach—a man gives the *rimbecco* to the son of a murdered person if he tells him his father has not been avenged. The *rimbecco* is a sort of summons to the man who has not yet wiped out the insult in blood. By the Genoese law the author of a *rimbecco* was very severely punished.

toms of the period. And then Sampiero was waging deadly war against the Genoese. What confidence could his fellow-countrymen have felt in him if he had not punished his wife, who tried to treat with Genoa?"

"Vannina," said the sailor, "had started off without her husband's leave. Sampiero did quite right to wring her neck!"

"But," said Miss Lydia, "it was to save her husband, it was out of love for him, that she was going to ask his pardon from the Genoese."

"To ask his pardon was to degrade him!" exclaimed Orso.

"And then to kill her himself!" said Miss Lydia. "What a monster he must have been!"

"You know she begged as a favour that she might die by his hand. What about Othello, mademoiselle, do you look on him, too, as a monster?"

"There is a difference; he was jealous. Sampiero was only vain!"

"And after all is not jealousy a kind of vanity? It is the vanity of love; will you not excuse it on account of its motive?"

Miss Lydia looked at him with an air of great dignity, and, turning to the sailor, inquired when the schooner would reach port.

"The day after to-morrow," said he, "if the wind holds."

"I wish Ajaccio were in sight already, for I am sick of this ship." She rose, took her maid's arm, and

walked a few paces on the deck. Orso stood motionless beside the helm, not knowing whether he had better walk beside her, or end a conversation which seemed displeasing to her.

"Blood of the Madonna, what a handsome girl!" said the sailor. "If every flea in my bed were like her, I shouldn't complain of their biting me!"

Miss Lydia may possibly have overheard this artless praise of her beauty and been startled by it; for she went below almost immediately. Shortly after Orso also retired. As soon as he had left the deck the maid reappeared, and, having cross-questioned the sailor, carried back the following informatioin to her mistress. The *ballata* which had been broken off on Orso's appearance had been composed on the occasion of the death of his father, Colonel della Rebbia, who had been murdered two years previously. The sailor had no doubt at all that Orso was coming back to Corsica *per fare la vendetta*, such was his expression, and he affirmed that before long there would be *fresh meat* to be seen in the village of Pietranera. This national expression, being interpreted, meant that Signor Orso proposed to murder two or three individuals suspected of having assassinated his father—individuals who had, indeed, been prosecuted on that account, but had come out of the trial as white as snow, for they were hand and glove with the judges, lawyers, prefect, and gendarmes.

"There is no justice in Corsica," added the sailor, "and I put much more faith in a good gun than in a

judge of the Royal Court. If a man has an enemy he must choose one of the three S's." *

These interesting pieces of information wrought a notable change in Miss Lydia's manner and feeling with regard to Lieutenant della Rebbia. From that moment he became a person of importance in the romantic Englishwoman's eyes.

His careless air, his frank and good humour, which had at first impressed her so unfavourably, now seemed to her an additional merit, as being proofs of the deep dissimulation of a strong nature, which will not allow any inner feeling to appear upon the surface. Orso seemed to her a sort of Fieschi, who hid mighty designs under an appearance of frivolity, and, though it is less noble to kill a few rascals than to free one's country, still a fine deed of vengeance is a fine thing, and besides, women are rather glad to find their hero is not a politician. Then Miss Nevil remarked for the first time that the young lieutenant had large eyes, white teeth, an elegant figure, that he was well educated, and possessed the habits of good society. During the following day she talked to him frequently, and found his conversation interesting. He was asked many questions about his own country, and described it well. Corsica, which he had left when young, to go first to college, and then to the École militaire, had remained in his imagination surrounded with poetic associations. When he talked of its mountains, its forests, and the

* A national expression meaning *schioppetto*, *stiletto*, *strada*—that is, *gun*, *dagger*, or *flight*.

quaint customs of its inhabitants he grew eager and animated. As may be imagined, the word *vengeance* occurred more than once in the stories he told—for it is impossible to speak of the Corsicans without either attacking or justifying their proverbial passion. Orso somewhat surprised Miss Nevil by his general condemnation of the undying hatreds nursed by his fellow-countrymen. As regarded the peasants, however, he endeavoured to excuse them, and claimed that the *vendetta* is the poor man's duel. "So true is this," he said, "that no assassination takes place till a formal challenge has been delivered. 'Be on your guard yourself, I am on mine!' are the sacramental words exchanged, from time immemorial, between two enemies, before they begin to lie in wait for each other. There are more assassinations among us," he added, "than anywhere else. But you will never discover an ignoble cause for any of these crimes. We have many murderers, it is true, but not a single thief."

When he spoke about vengeance and murder Miss Lydia looked at him closely, but she could not detect the slightest trace of emotion on his features. As she had made up her mind, however, that he possessed sufficient strength of mind to be able to hide his thoughts from every eye (her own, of course, excepted), she continued in her firm belief that Colonel della Rebbia's shade would not have to wait long for the atonement it claimed.

The schooner was already within sight of Corsica. The captain pointed out the principal features of the

coast, and, though all of these were absolutely unknown to Miss Lydia, she found a certain pleasure in hearing their names; nothing is more tiresome than an anonymous landscape. From time to time the colonel's telescope revealed to her the form of some islander clad in brown cloth, armed with a long gun, bestriding a small horse, and galloping down steep slopes. In each of these Miss Lydia believed she beheld either a brigand or a son going forth to avenge his father's death. But Orso always declared it was some peaceful denizen of a neighbouring village travelling on business, and that he carried a gun less from necessity than because it was the fashion, just as no dandy ever takes a walk without an elegant cane. Though a gun is a less noble and poetic weapon than a stiletto, Miss Lydia thought it much more stylish for a man than any cane, and she remembered that all Lord Byron's heroes died by a bullet, and not by the classic poniard.

After three days' sailing, the ship reached Les Sanguinaires (The Bloody Islands), and the magnificent panorama of the Gulf of Ajaccio was unrolled before our travellers' eyes. It is compared, with justice, to the Bay of Naples, and just as the schooner was entering the harbour a burning *mâquis*, which covered the Punta di Girato, brought back memories of Vesuvius and heightened the resemblance. To make it quite complete, Naples should be seen after one of Attila's armies had devastated its suburbs—for round Ajaccio everything looks dead and deserted. Instead of the handsome buildings observable on every side from Cas-

tellamare to Cape Misena, nothing is to be seen in the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Ajaccio but gloomy *mâquis* with bare mountains rising behind them. Not a villa, not a dwelling of any kind—only here and there, on the heights about the town, a few isolated white structures stand out against a background of green. These are mortuary chapels or family tombs. Everything in this landscape is gravely and sadly beautiful.

The appearance of the town, at that period especially, deepened the impression caused by the loneliness of its surroundings. There was no stir in the streets, where only a few listless idlers—always the same—were to be seen; no women at all, except an odd peasant come in to sell her produce; no loud talk, laughter, and singing, as in the Italian towns. Sometimes, under the shade of a tree on the public promenade, a dozen armed peasants will play at cards or watch each other play; they never shout or wrangle; if they get hot over the game, pistol shots ring out, and this always before the utterance of any threat. The Corsican is grave and silent by nature. In the evening, a few persons come out to enjoy the cool air, but the promenaders on the Corso are nearly all of them foreigners; the islanders stay in front of their own doors; each one seems on the watch, like a falcon over its nest.

CHAPTER IV

When Miss Lydia had visited the house in which Napoleon was born, and had procured, by means more or less moral, a fragment of the wall-paper belonging to it, she, within two days of her landing in Corsica, began to feel that profound melancholy which must overcome every foreigner in a country whose unsociable inhabitants appear to condemn him or her to a condition of utter isolation. She was already regretting her headstrong caprice; but to go back at once would have been to risk her reputation as an intrepid traveller, so she made up her mind to be patient, and kill time as best she could. With this noble resolution, she brought out her crayons and colours, sketched views of the gulf, and did the portrait of a sunburnt peasant, who sold melons, like any market-gardener on the Continent, but who wore a long white beard, and looked the fiercest rascal that had ever been seen. As all that was not enough to amuse her, she determined to turn the head of the descendant of the corporals, and this was no difficult matter, since, far from being in a hurry to get back to his village, Orso seemed very happy at Ajaccio, although he knew nobody there. Furthermore, Miss Lydia had a lofty purpose in her mind; it was

nothing less than to civilize this mountain bear, and induce him to relinquish the sinister design which had recalled him to his island. Since she had taken the trouble to study the young man, she had told herself it would be a pity to let him rush upon his ruin, and that it would be a glorious thing to convert a Corsican.

Our travellers spent the day in the following manner: Every morning the colonel and Orso went out shooting. Miss Lydia sketched or wrote letters to her friends, chiefly for the sake of dating them from Ajaccio. Toward six o'clock the gentlemen came in, laden with game. Then followed dinner. Miss Lydia sang, the colonel went to sleep, and the young people sat talking till very late.

Some formality or other, connected with his passports, had made it necessary for Colonel Nevil to call on the prefect. This gentleman, who, like most of his colleagues, found his life very dull, had been delighted to hear of the arrival of an Englishman who was rich, a man of the world, and the father of a pretty daughter. He had, therefore, given him the most friendly reception, and overwhelmed him with offers of service; further, within a very few days, he came to return his visit. The colonel, who had just dined, was comfortably stretched out upon his sofa, and very nearly asleep. His daughter was singing at a broken-down piano; Orso was turning over the leaves of her music, and gazing at the fair singer's shoulders and golden hair. The prefect was announced, the piano stopped, the colonel

got up, rubbed his eyes, and introduced the prefect to his daughter.

"I do not introduce M. della Rebbia to you," said he, "for no doubt you know him already."

"Is this gentleman Colonel della Rebbia's son?" said the prefect, looking a trifle embarrassed.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Orso.

"I had the honour of knowing your father."

The ordinary commonplaces of conversation were soon exhausted. The colonel, in spite of himself, yawned pretty frequently. Orso, as a liberal, did not care to converse with a satellite of the Government. The burden of the conversation fell on Miss Lydia. The prefect, on his side, did not let it drop, and it was clear that he found the greatest pleasure in talking of Paris, and of the great world, to a woman who was acquainted with all the foremost people in European society. As he talked, he now and then glanced at Orso, with an expression of singular curiosity.

"Was it on the Continent that you made M. della Rebbia's acquaintance?" he inquired.

Somewhat embarrassed, Miss Lydia replied that she had made his acquaintance on the ship which had carried them to Corsica.

"He is a very gentlemanly young fellow," said the prefect, in an undertone; "and has he told you," he added, dropping his voice still lower, "why he has returned to Corsica?"

Miss Lydia put on her most majestic air and answered:

"I have not asked him," she said. "You may do so."

The prefect kept silence, but, an instant later, hearing Orso speak a few words of English to the colonel, he said:

"You seem to have travelled a great deal, monsieur. You must have forgotten Corsica and Corsican habits."

"It is quite true that I was very young when I went away."

"You still belong to the army?"

"I am on half pay, monsieur."

"You have been too long in the French army not to have become a thorough Frenchman, I have no doubt?"

The last words of the sentence were spoken with marked emphasis.

The Corsicans are not particularly flattered at being reminded that they belong to the "Great Nation." They claim to be a people apart, and so well do they justify their claim that it may very well be granted them.

Somewhat nettled, Orso replied: "Do you think, M. le Préfet, that a Corsican must necessarily serve in the French army to become an honourable man?"

"No, indeed," said the prefect, "that is not my idea at all; I am only speaking of certain *customs* belonging to this country, some of which are not such as a Government official would like to see."

He emphasized the word *customs*, and put on as grave an expression as his features could assume. Soon

after he got up and took his leave, bearing with him Miss Lydia's promise that she would go and call on his wife at the prefecture.

When he had departed: "I had to come to Corsica," said Miss Lydia, "to find out what a prefect is like. This one strikes me as rather amiable."

"For my part," said Orso, "I can't say as much. He strikes me as a very queer individual, with his airs of emphasis and mystery."

The colonel was extremely drowsy. Miss Lydia cast a glance in his direction, and, lowering his voice:

"And I," she said, "do not think him so mysterious as you pretend; for I believe I understood him!"

"Then you are clear-sighted indeed, Miss Nevil. If you have seen any wit in what he has just said you must certainly have put it there yourself."

"It is the Marquis de Mascarille, I think, who says that, M. della Rebbia. But would you like me to give you a proof of my clear-sightedness? I am something of a witch, and I can read the thoughts of people I have seen only twice."

"Good heavens! you alarm me. If you really can read my thoughts I don't know whether I should be glad or sorry."

"M. della Rebbia," went on Miss Lydia, with a blush, "we have only known each other for a few days. But at sea, and in savage countries (you will excuse me, I hope)—in savage countries friendships grow more quickly than they do in society . . . so you must not be astonished if I speak to you, as a friend, upon

private matters, with which, perhaps, a stranger ought not to interfere."

"Ah! do not say that word, Miss Nevil. I like the other far better."

"Well, then, monsieur, I must tell you that without having tried to find out your secrets, I have learned some of them, and they grieve me. I have heard, monsieur, of the misfortune which has overtaken your family. A great deal has been said to me about the vindictive nature of your fellow-countrymen, and the fashion in which they take their vengeance. Was it not to that the prefect was alluding?"

"Miss Lydia! Can you believe it!" and Orso turned deadly pale.

"No, M. della Rebbia," she said, interrupting him, "I know you to be a most honourable gentleman. You have told me yourself that it was only the common people in your country who still practised the *vendetta*—which you are pleased to describe as a kind of duel."

"Do you, then, believe me capable of ever becoming a murderer?"

"Since I have mentioned the subject at all, Monsieur Orso, you must clearly see that I do not suspect you, and if I have spoken to you at all," she added, dropping her eyes, "it is because I have realized that surrounded, it may be, by barbarous prejudices on your return home, you will be glad to know that there is somebody who esteems you for having the courage to resist them. Come!" said she, rising to her feet, "don't let us talk again of such horrid things, they make

my head ache, and besides it's very late. You are not angry with me, are you? Let us say good-night in the English fashion," and she held out her hand.

Orso pressed it, looking grave and deeply moved.

" Mademoiselle," he said, " do you know that there are moments when the instincts of my country wake up within me. Sometimes, when I think of my poor father, horrible thoughts assail me. Thanks to you, I am rid of them forever. Thank you! thank you! "

He would have continued, but Miss Lydia dropped a teaspoon, and the noise woke up the colonel.

" Della Rebbia, we'll start at five o'clock to-morrow morning. Be punctual! "

" Yes, colonel."

CHAPTER V

The next day, a short time before the sportsmen came back, Miss Nevil, returning with her maid from a walk along the seashore, was just about to enter the inn, when she noticed a young woman, dressed in black, riding into the town on a small but strong horse. She was followed by a sort of peasant, also on horseback, who wore a brown cloth jacket out at the elbows. A gourd was slung over his shoulder and a pistol was hanging at his belt, his hand grasped a gun, the butt of which rested in a leathern pocket fastened to his saddle-bow—in short, he wore the complete costume of a brigand in a melodrama, or of the middle-class Corsican on his travels. Miss Nevil's attention was first attracted by the woman's remarkable beauty. She seemed about twenty years of age; she was tall and pale, with dark blue eyes, red lips, and teeth like enamel. In her expression pride, anxiety, and sadness were all legible. On her head she wore a black silk veil called a *mezzaro*, which the Genoese introduced into Corsica, and which is so becoming to women. Long braids of chestnut hair formed a sort of turban round her head. Her dress was neat, but simple in the extreme.

Miss Nevil had plenty of time to observe her, for

the lady in the *mezzaro* had halted in the street, and was questioning somebody on a subject which, to judge from the expression of her eyes, must have interested her exceedingly. Then, as soon as she received an answer, she touched her mount with her riding-switch, and, breaking into a quick trot, never halted till she reached the door of the hotel in which Sir Thomas Nevil and Orso were staying. There, after exchanging a few words with the host, the girl sprang nimbly from her saddle and seated herself on a stone bench beside the entrance door, while her groom led the horses away to the stable. Miss Lydia, in her Paris gown, passed close beside the stranger, who did not raise her eyes. A quarter of an hour later she opened her window, and saw the lady in the *mezzaro* still sitting in the same place and in the same attitude. Not long afterward the colonel and Orso returned from hunting. Then the landlord said a few words to the young lady in mourning, and pointed to della Rebbia with his finger. She coloured deeply, rose eagerly, went a few paces forward, and then stopped short, apparently much confused. Orso was quite close to her, and was looking at her curiously.

"Are you Orso Antonio della Rebbia?" said she in a tremulous voice. "I am Colomba."

"Colomba!" cried Orso.

And taking her in his arms he kissed her tenderly, somewhat to the surprise of the colonel and his daughter—for in England people do not kiss each other in the street.

"Brother," said Colomba, "you must forgive me for having come without your permission. But I heard from our friends that you had arrived, and it is such a great consolation to me to see you."

Again Orso kissed her. Then, turning to the colonel:

"This is my sister," said he, "whom I never should have recognised if she had not told me her name—Colomba—Colonel Sir Thomas Nevil—colonel, you will kindly excuse me, but I can not have the honour of dining with you to-day. My sister——"

"But, my dear fellow, where the devil do you expect to dine? You know very well there is only one dinner in this infernal tavern, and we have bespoken it. It will afford my daughter great pleasure if this young lady will join us."

Colomba looked at her brother, who did not need much pressing, and they all passed together into the largest room in the inn, which the colonel used as his sitting and dining room. Mademoiselle della Rebbia, on being introduced to Miss Nevil, made her a deep courtesy, but she did not utter a single word. It was easy to see that she was very much frightened at finding herself, perhaps for the first time in her life, in the company of strangers belonging to the great world. Yet there was nothing provincial in her manners. The novelty of her position excused her awkwardness. Miss Nevil took a liking to her at once, and, as there was no room disengaged in the hotel, the whole of which was occupied by the colonel and his attendants, she offered,

either out of condescension or curiosity, to have a bed prepared in her own room for Mademoiselle della Rebbia.

Colomba stammered a few words of thanks, and hastened after Miss Nevil's maid, to make such changes in her toilet as were rendered necessary by a journey on horseback in the dust and heat.

When she re-entered the sitting-room, she paused in front of the colonel's guns, which the hunters had left in a corner.

"What fine weapons," said she. "Are they yours, brother?"

"No, they are the colonel's English guns—and they are as good as they are handsome."

"How much I wish you had one like them!" said Colomba.

"One of those three certainly does belong to della Rebbia," exclaimed the colonel. "He really shoots almost too well! To-day he fired fourteen shots, and brought down fourteen head of game."

A friendly dispute at once ensued, in which Orso was vanquished, to his sister's great satisfaction, as it was easy to perceive from the childish expression of delight which illumined her face, so serious a moment before.

"Choose, my dear fellow," said the colonel; but Orso refused.

"Very well, then. Your sister shall choose for you."

Colomba did not wait for a second invitation. She

took up the plainest of the guns, but it was a first-rate Manton of large calibre.

"This one," she said, "must carry a ball a long distance."

Her brother was growing quite confused in his expressions of gratitude, when dinner appeared, very opportunely, to help him out of his embarrassment.

Miss Lydia was delighted to notice that Colomba, who had shown considerable reluctance to sit down with them, and had yielded only at a glance from her brother, crossed herself, like a good Catholic, before she began to eat.

"Good!" said she to herself, "that is primitive!" and she anticipated acquiring many interesting facts by observing this youthful representative of ancient Corsican manners. As for Orso, he was evidently a trifle uneasy, fearing, doubtless, that his sister might say or do something which savoured too much of her native village. But Colomba watched him constantly, and regulated all her own movements by his. Sometimes she looked at him fixedly, with a strange expression of sadness, and then, if Orso's eyes met hers, he was the first to turn them away, as though he would evade some question which his sister was mentally addressing to him, the sense of which he understood only too well. Everybody talked French, for the colonel could only express himself very badly in Italian. Colomba understood French, and even pronounced the few words she was obliged to exchange with her entertainers tolerably well.

After dinner, the colonel, who had noticed the sort of constraint which existed between the brother and sister, inquired of Orso, with his customary frankness, whether he did not wish to be alone with Mademoiselle Colomba, offering, in that case, to go into the next room with his daughter. But Orso hastened to thank him, and to assure him they would have plenty of time to talk at Pietranera—this was the name of the village where he was to take up his abode.

The colonel then resumed his customary position on the sofa, and Miss Nevil, after attempting several subjects of conversation, gave up all hope of inducing the fair Colomba to talk, and begged Orso to read her a canto out of Dante, her favourite poet. Orso chose the canto of the Inferno, containing the episode of Francesca da Rimini, and began to read, as impressively as he was able, the glorious tiercets which so admirably express the risk run by two young persons who venture to read a love-story together. As he read on Colomba drew nearer to the table, and raised her head, which she had kept lowered. Her wide-open eyes shone with extraordinary fire, she grew red and pale by turns, and stirred convulsively in her chair. How admirable is the Italian organization, which can understand poetry without needing a pedant to explain its beauties!

When the canto was finished:

"How beautiful that is!" she exclaimed. "Who wrote it, brother?"

Orso was a little disconcerted, and Miss Lydia an-

swered with a smile that it was written by a Florentine poet, who had been dead for centuries.

"You shall read Dante," said Orso, "when we are at Pietranera."

"Good heavens, how beautiful it is!" said Colomba again, and she repeated three or four tiercets which she had remembered, speaking at first in an undertone; then, growing excited, she declaimed them aloud, with far more expression than her brother had put into his reading.

Miss Lydia was very much astonished.

"You seem very fond of poetry," she said. "How I envy you the delight you will find in reading Dante for the first time!"

"You see, Miss Nevil," said Orso, "what a power Dante's lines must have, when they so move a wild young savage who knows nothing but her *Pater*. But I am mistaken! I recollect now that Colomba belongs to the guild. Even when she was quite a little child she used to try her hand at verse-making, and my father used to write me word that she was the best *voceratrice* in Pietranera, and for two leagues round about."

Colomba cast an imploring glance at her brother. Miss Nevil had heard of the Corsican *improvisatrici*, and was dying to hear one. She begged Colomba, then, to give her a specimen of her powers. Very much vexed now at having made any mention of his sister's poetic gifts, Orso interposed. In vain did he protest that nothing was so insipid as a Corsican *ballata*, and

that to recite Corsican verses after those of Dante was like betraying his country. All he did was to stimulate Miss Nevil's curiosity, and at last he was obliged to say to his sister:

"Well! well! improvise something—but let it be short!"

Colomba heaved a sigh, looked fixedly for a moment, first at the table-cloth, and then at the rafters of the ceiling; at last, covering her eyes with her hand like those birds that gather courage, and fancy they are not seen when they no longer see themselves, she sang, or rather declaimed, in an unsteady voice, the following *serenata:*

"THE MAIDEN AND THE TURTLE-DOVE

"In the valley, far away among the mountains, the sun only shines for an hour every day. In the valley there stands a gloomy house, and grass grows on its threshold. Doors and windows are always shut. No smoke rises from the roof. But at noon, when the sunshine falls, a window opens, and the orphan girl sits spinning at her wheel. She spins, and as she works, she sings—a song of sadness. But no other song comes to answer hers! One day—a day in spring-time—a turtle-dove settled on a tree hard by, and heard the maiden's song. 'Maiden,' it said, 'thou art not the only mourner! A cruel hawk has snatched my mate from me!' 'Turtle-dove, show me that cruel hawk; were it to soar higher than the clouds I would soon bring it down to earth! But who will restore to me, unhappy

that I am, my brother, now in a far country?' 'Maiden, tell me, where thy brother is, and my wings shall bear me to him.'"

"A well-bred turtle-dove, indeed!" exclaimed Orso, and the emotion with which he kissed his sister contrasted strongly with the jesting tone in which he spoke.

"Your song is delightful," said Miss Lydia. "You must write it in my album; I'll translate it into English, and have it set to music."

The worthy colonel, who had not understood a single word, added his compliments to his daughter's and added: "Is this dove you speak of the bird we eat broiled at dinner to-day?"

Miss Nevil fetched her album, and was not a little surprised to see the *improvvisatrice* write down her song, with so much care in the matter of economizing space.

The lines, instead of being separate, were all run together, as far as the breadth of the paper would permit, so that they did not agree with the accepted definition of poetic composition—"short lines of unequal length, with a margin on each side of them." Mademoiselle Colomba's somewhat fanciful spelling might also have excited comment. More than once Miss Nevil was seen to smile, and Orso's fraternal vanity suffered tortures.

Bedtime came, and the two young girls retired to their room. There, while Miss Lydia unclasped her

necklace, ear-rings, and bracelets, she watched her companion draw something out of her gown—something as long as a stay-busk, but very different in shape. Carefully, almost stealthily, Colomba slipped this object under her *mezzaro*, which she had laid on the table. Then she knelt down, and said her prayers devoutly. Two minutes afterward she was in her bed. Miss Lydia, naturally very inquisitive, and as slow as every Englishwoman is about undressing herself, moved over to the table, pretended she was looking for a pin, lifted up the *mezzaro*, and saw a long stiletto—curiously mounted in silver and mother-of-pearl. The workmanship was remarkably fine. It was an ancient weapon, and just the sort of one an amateur would have prized very highly.

"Is it the custom here," inquired Miss Nevil, with a smile, "for young ladies to wear such little instruments as these in their bodices?"

"It is," answered Colomba, with a sigh. "There are so many wicked people about!"

"And would you really have the courage to strike with it, like this?" And Miss Nevil, dagger in hand, made a gesture of stabbing from above, as actors do on the stage.

"Yes," said Colomba, in her soft, musical voice, "if I had to do it to protect myself or my friends. But you must not hold it like that, you might wound yourself if the person you were going to stab were to draw back." Then, sitting up in bed, "See," she added, "you must strike like this—upward! If you do so, the

thrust is sure to kill, they say. Happy are they who never need such weapons."

She sighed, dropped her head back on the pillow, and closed her eyes. A more noble, beautiful, virginal head it would be impossible to imagine. Phidias would have asked no other model for Minerva.

CHAPTER VI

It is in obedience to the precept of Horace that I have begun by plunging *in media res*. Now that every one is alseep—the beautiful Colomba, the colonel, and his daughter—I will seize the opportunity to acquaint my reader with certain details of which he must not be ignorant, if he desires to follow the further course of this veracious history. He is already aware that Colonel della Rebbia, Orso's father, had been assassinated. Now, in Corsica, people are not murdered, as they are in France, by the first escaped convict who can devise no better means of relieving a man of his silver-plate. In Corsica a man is murdered by his enemies—but the reason he has enemies is often very difficult to discover. Many families hate each other because it has been an old-standing habit of theirs to hate each other; but the tradition of the original cause of their hatred may have completely disappeared.

The family to which Colonel della Rebbia belonged hated several other families, but that of the Barricini particularly. Some people asserted that in the sixteenth century a della Rebbia had seduced a lady of the Barricini family, and had afterward been poniarded by a relative of the outraged damsel. Others, indeed, told

the story in a different fashion, declaring that it was a della Rebbia who had been seduced, and a Barricini who had been poniarded. However that may be, there was, to use the time-honoured expression, "blood between the two houses." Nevertheless, and contrary to custom, this murder had not resulted in others; for the della Rebbia and the Barricini had both been equally persecuted by the Genoese Government, and as the young men had all left the country, the two families were deprived, during several generations, of their more energetic representatives. At the close of the last century, one of the della Rebbias, an officer in the Neapolitan service, quarrelled, in a gambling hell, with some soldiers, who called him a Corsican goatherd, and other insulting names. He drew his sword, but being only one against three, he would have fared very ill if a stranger, who was playing in the same room, had not exclaimed, "I, too, am a Corsican," and come to his rescue. This stranger was one of the Barricini, who, for that matter, was not acquainted with his countryman. After mutual explanations, they interchanged courtesies and vowed eternal friendship. For on the Continent, quite contrary to their practice in their own island, Corsicans quickly become friends. This fact was clearly exemplified on the present occasion. As long as della Rebbia and Barricini remained in Italy they were close friends. Once they were back in Corsica, they saw each other but very seldom, although they both lived in the same village; and when they died, it was reported that they had not spoken to each

other for five or six years. Their sons lived in the same fashion—"on ceremony," as they say in the island; one of them, Ghilfuccio, Orso's father, was a soldier; the other, Giudice Barricini, was a lawyer. Having both become heads of families, and being separated by their professions, they scarcely ever had an opportunity of seeing or hearing of each other.

One day, however, about the year 1809, Giudice read in a newspaper at Bastia that Captain Ghilfuccio had just been decorated, and remarked, before witnesses, that he was not at all surprised, considering that the family enjoyed the protection of General ——. This remark was reported at Vienna to Ghilfuccio, who told one of his countrymen that, when he got back to Corsica, he would find Giudice a very rich man, because he made more money out of the suits he lost than out of those he won. It was never known whether he meant this as an insinuation that the lawyer cheated his clients, or as a mere allusion to the commonplace truth that a bad cause often brings a lawyer more profit than a good one. However that may have been, the lawyer Barricini heard of the epigram, and never forgot it. In 1812 he applied for the post of mayor of his commune, and had every hope of being appointed, when General —— wrote to the prefect, to recommend one of Ghilfuccio's wife's relations. The prefect lost no time in carrying out the general's wish, and Barricini felt no doubt that he owed his failure to the intrigues of Ghilfuccio. In 1814, after the emperor's fall, the general's protégé was denounced as a Bonapartist,

and his place was taken by Barricini. He, in his turn, was dismissed during the Hundred Days, but when the storm had blown over, he again took possession, with great pomp, of the mayoral seal and the municipal registers.

From this moment his star shone brighter than ever. Colonel della Rebbia, now living on half-pay at Pietranera, had to defend himself against covert and repeated attacks due to the pettifogging malignity of his enemy. At one time he was summoned to pay for the damage his horse had done to the mayor's fences; at another, the latter, under pretence of repairing the floor of the church, ordered the removal of a broken flagstone bearing the della Rebbia arms, which covered the grave of some member of the family. If the village goats ate the colonel's young plants, the mayor always protected their owners. The grocer who kept the post-office at Pietranera, and the old maimed soldier who had been the village policeman—both of them attached to the della Rebbia family—were turned adrift, and their places filled by Barricini's creatures.

The colonel's wife died, and her last wish was that she might be buried in the middle of the little wood in which she had been fond of walking. Forthwith the mayor declared she should be buried in the village cemetery, because he had no authority to permit burial in any other spot. The colonel, in a fury, declared that until the permit came, his wife would be interred in the spot she had chosen. He had her grave dug there. The mayor, on his side, had another grave dug in the

cemetery, and sent for the police, that the law, so he declared, might be duly enforced. On the day of the funeral, the two parties came face to face, and, for a moment, there was reason to fear a struggle might ensue for the possession of Signora della Rebbia's corpse. Some forty well-armed peasants, mustered by the dead woman's relatives, forced the priest, when he issued from the church, to take the road to the wood. On the other hand, the mayor, at the head of his two sons, his dependents, and the gendarmes, advanced to oppose their march. When he appeared, and called on the procession to turn back, he was greeted with howls and threats. The advantage of numbers was with his opponents, and they seemed thoroughly determined. At sight of him several guns were loaded, and one shepherd is even said to have levelled his musket at him, but the colonel knocked up the barrel, and said, "Let no man fire without my orders!" The mayor, who, like Panurge, had "a natural fear of blows," refused to give battle, and retired, with his escort. Then the funeral procession started, carefully choosing the longest way, so as to pass in front of the mayor's house. As it was filing by, an idiot, who had joined its ranks, took it into his head to shout, "Vive l'Empereur!" Two or three voices answered him, and the Rebbianites, growing hotter, proposed killing one of the mayor's oxen, which chanced to bar their way. Fortunately the colonel stopped this act of violence.

It is hardly necessary to mention that an official statement was at once drawn up, or that the mayor sent

the prefect a report, in his sublimest style, descrbing the manner in which all laws, human and divine, had been trodden under foot—how the majesty of himself, the mayor, and of the priest had been flouted and insulted, and how Colonel della Rebbia had put himself at the head of a Bonapartist plot, to change the order of succession to the throne, and to excite peaceful citizens to take arms against one another—crimes provided against by Articles 86 and 91 of the Penal Code.

The exaggerated tone of this complaint diminished its effect. The colonel wrote to the prefect and to the public prosecutor. One of his wife's kinsmen was related to one of the deputies of the island, another was cousin to the president of the Royal Court. Thanks to this interest, the plot faded out of sight, Signora della Rebbia was left quiet in the wood, and the idiot alone was sentenced to a fornight's imprisonment.

Lawyer Barricini, dissatisfied with the result of this affair, turned his batteries in a different direction. He dug out some old claim, whereby he undertook to contest the colonel's ownership of a certain water-course which turned a mill-wheel. A lawsuit began and dragged slowly along. At the end of twelve months, the court was about to give its decision, and according to all appearances in favour of the colonel, when Barricini placed in the hands of the public prosecutor a letter, signed by a certain Agostini, a well-known bandit, threatening him, the mayor, with fire and sword if he did not relinquish his pretensions. It is well known

that in Corsica the protection of these brigands is much sought after, and that, to oblige their friends, they frequently intervene in private quarrels. The mayor was deriving considerable advantage from this letter, when the business was further complicated by a fresh incident. Agostini, the bandit, wrote to the public prosecutor, to complain that his handwriting had been counterfeited, and his character aspersed, by some one who desired to represent him as a man who made a traffic of his influence. "If I can discover the forger," he said at the end of his letter, "I will make a striking example of him."

It was quite clear that Agostini did not write the threatening letter to the mayor. The della Rebbia accused the Barricini of it and *vice versa*. Both parties broke into open threats, and the authorities did not know where to find the culprit.

In the midst of all this Colonel Ghilfuccio was murdered. Here are the facts, as they were elicited at the official injuiry. On the 2d of August, 18—, toward nightfall, a woman named Maddalena Pietri, who was carrying corn to Pietranera, heard two shots fired, very close together, the reports, as it seemed to her, coming from the deep lane leading to the village, about a hundred and fifty paces from the spot on which she stood. Almost immediately afterward she saw a man running, crouching along a footpath among the vines, and making for the village. The man stopped for a minute, and turned round, but the distance prevented the woman Pietri from seeing his features, and besides,

he had a vine-leaf in his mouth, which hid almost the whole of his face. He made a signal with his head to some comrade, whom the witness could not see, and then disappeared among the vines.

The woman Pietri dropped her burden, ran up the path, and found Colonel della Rebbia, bathed in his own blood from two bullet wounds, but still breathing. Close beside him lay his gun, loaded and cocked, as if he had been defending himself against a person who had attacked him in front, just when another had struck him from behind. Although the rattle was in his throat, he struggled against the grip of death, but he could not utter a word—this the doctors explained by the nature of the wounds, which had cut through his lungs: the blood was choking him, it flowed slowly, like red froth. In vain did the woman lift him up, and ask him several questions. She saw plainly enough that he desired to speak, but he could not make himself understood. Noticing that he was trying to get his hand to his pocket, she quickly drew out of it a little note-book, which she opened and gave to him.

The wounded man took the pencil out of the note-book and tried to write. In fact, the witness saw him form several letters, but with great difficulty. As she could not read, however, she was unable to understand their meaning. Exhausted by the effort, the colonel left the note-book in the woman's hand, which he squeezed tightly, looking at her strangely, as if he wanted to say (these are the witness's own words): "It is important —it is my murderer's name!"

Maddalena Pietri was going up to the village, when she met Barricini, the mayor, with his son Vincentello. It was then almost dark. She told them what she had seen. The mayor took the note-book, hurried up to his house, put on his sash, and fetched his secretary and the gendarmes. Left alone with young Vincentello, Maddalena Pietri suggested that he should go to the colonel's assistance, in case he was still alive, but Vincentello replied that if he were to go near a man who had been the bitter enemy of his family, he would certainly be accused of having killed him. A very short time afterward the mayor arrived, found the colonel dead, had the corpse carried away, and drew up his report.

In spite of the agitation so natural on such an occasion, Monsieur Barricini had hastened to place the colonel's note-book under seal, and to make all the inquiries in his power, but none of them resulted in any discovery of importance.

When the examining magistrate arrived the note-book was opened, and on a blood-stained page were seen letters written in a trembling hand, but still quite legible; the sheet bore the word *Agosti*—and the judge did not doubt that the colonel had intended to point out Agostini as his murderer. Nevertheless, Colomba della Rebbia, who had been summoned by the magistrate, asked leave to examine the note-book. After turning over the leaves for a few moments, she stretched out her hand toward the mayor and cried, "There stands the murderer!" Then with a precision

and a clearness which were astonishing, considering the passion of sorrow that shook her, she related that, a few days previously, her father had received a letter from his son, which he had burned, but that before doing so he had written Orso's address (he had just changed his garrison) in the note-book with his pencil. Now, his address was no longer in the note-book, and Colomba concluded that the mayor had torn out the leaf on which it was written, which probably was that on which her father had traced the murderer's name, and for that name the mayor, according to Colomba, had substituted Agostini's. The magistrate, in fact, noticed that one sheet was missing from the quire on which the name was written, but he remarked also that leaves were likewise missing from other quires in the same note-book, and certain witnesses testified that the colonel had a habit of tearing out pages when he wanted to light a cigar—therefore nothing was more probable than that, by an oversight, he had burned the address he had copied. Further, it was shown that the mayor could not have read the note-book on receiving it from Maddalena Pietri, on account of the darkness, and it was proved that he had not stopped an instant before he went into his house, that the sergeant of the gendarmes had gone there with him, and had seen him light a lamp and put the note-book into an envelope which he had sealed before his eyes.

When this officer had concluded his deposition, Colomba, half-distracted, cast herself at his feet, and besought him, by all he held most sacred, to say whether

he had not left the mayor alone for a single moment. After a certain amount of hesitation, the man, who was evidently affected by the young girl's excitement, admitted that he had gone into the next room to fetch a sheet of foolscap, but that he had not been away a minute, and that the mayor had talked to him all the time he was groping for the paper in a drawer. Moreover, he deposed that when he came back the blood-stained note-book was still on the table, in the very place where the mayor had thrown it when he first came in.

Monsieur Barricini gave his evidence with the utmost coolness. He made allowances, he said, for Mademoiselle della Rebbia's excitement, and was ready to condescend to justify himself. He proved that he had spent his whole evening in the village, that his son Vincentello had been with him in front of the house at the moment when the crime was committed, and that his son Orlanduccio, who had had an attack of fever that very day, had never left his bed. He produced every gun in his house, and not one of them had been recently discharged. He added, that, as regarded the note-book, he had at once realized its importance; that he had sealed it up, and placed it in the hands of his deputy, foreseeing that he himself might be suspected, on account of his quarrel with the colonel. Finally, he reminded the court that Agostini had threatened to kill the man who had written a letter in his name, and he insinuated that this ruffian had probably suspected the colonel, and murdered him. Such a

vengeance, for a similar reason, is by no means unprecedented in the history of brigandage.

Five days after Colonel della Rebbia's death, Agostini was surprised by a detachment of riflemen, and killed, fighting desperately to the last. On his person was found a letter from Colomba, beseeching him to declare whether he was guilty of the murder imputed to him, or not. As the bandit had sent no answer, it was pretty generally concluded that he had not the courage to tell a daughter he had murdered her father. Yet those who claimed to know Agostini's nature thoroughly, whispered that if he had killed the colonel, he would have boasted of the deed. Another bandit, known by the name of Brandolaccio, sent Colomba a declaration in which he bore witness "on his honour" to his comrade's innocence—but the only proof he put forward was that Agostini had never told him that he suspected the colonel.

The upshot was that the Barricini suffered no inconvenience, the examining magistrate was loud in his praise of the mayor, and the mayor, on his side, crowned his handsome behaviour by relinquishing all his claims over the stream, concerning which he had brought the lawsuit against Colonel della Rebbia.

According to the custom of her country, Colomba improvised a *ballata* in presence of her father's corpse, and before his assembled friends. In it she poured out all her hatred against the Barricini, formally charged them with the murder, and threatened them with her brother's vengeance. It was this same *ballata*, which

had grown very popular, that the sailor had sung before Miss Lydia. When Orso, who was in the north of France, heard of his father's death, he applied for leave, but failed to obtain it. A letter from his sister led him to believe at first in the guilt of the Barricini, but he soon received copies of all the documents connected with the inquiry and a private letter from the judge, which almost convinced him that the bandit Agostini was the only culprit. Every three months Colomba had written to him, reiterating her suspicions, which she called her "proofs." In spite of himself, these accusations made his Corsican blood boil, and sometimes he was very near sharing his sister's prejudices. Nevertheless, every time he wrote to her he repeated his conviction that her allegations possessed no solid foundation, and were quite unworthy of belief. He even forbade her, but always vainly, to mention them to him again.

Thus two years went by. At the end of that time Orso was placed on half-pay, and then it occurred to him to go back to his own country—not at all for the purpose of taking vengeance on people whom he believed innocent, but to arrange a marriage for his sister, and the sale of his own small property—if its value should prove sufficient to enable him to live on the Continent.

CHAPTER VII

WHETHER it was that the arrival of his sister had reminded Orso forcibly of his paternal home, or that Colomba's unconventional dress and manners made him feel shy before his civilized friends, he announced, the very next day, his determination to leave Ajaccio, and to return to Pietranera. But he made the colonel promise that when he went to Bastia he would come and stay in his modest manor-house, and undertook, in return, to provide him with plenty of buck, pheasant, boar, and other game.

On the day before that of his departure Orso proposed that, instead of going out shooting, they should all take a walk along the shores of the gulf. With Miss Lydia on his arm he was able to talk in perfect freedom—for Colomba had stayed in the town to do her shopping, and the colonel was perpetually leaving the young people to fire shots at sea-gulls and gannets, greatly to the astonishment of the passers-by, who could not conceive why any man should waste his powder on such paltry game.

They were walking along the path leading to the Greek Chapel, which commands the finest view to be had of the bay, but they paid no attention to it.

"Miss Lydia," said Orso, after a silence which had lasted long enough to become embarrassing, "tell me frankly, what do you think of my sister?"

"I like her very much," answered Miss Nevil. "Better than you," she added, with a smile; "for she is a true Corsican, and you are rather too civilized a savage!"

"Too civilized! Well, in spite of myself, I feel that I am growing a savage again, since I have set my foot on the island! A thousand horrid thoughts disturb and torment me, and I wanted to talk with you a little before I plunge into my desert!"

"You must be brave, monsieur! Look at your sister's resignation; she sets you an example!"

"Ah! do not be deceived! Do not believe in her resignation. She has not said a word to me as yet, but every look of hers tells me what she expects of me."

"What does she expect of you, then?"

"Oh, nothing! Except that I should try whether your father's gun will kill a man as surely as it kills a partridge."

"What an idea! You can actually believe that, when you have just acknowledged that she has said nothing to you yet? It really is too dreadful of you!"

"If her thoughts were not fixed on vengeance, she would have spoken to me at once about our father; she has never done it. She would have mentioned the names of those she considers—wrongly, I know—to be his murderers. But no; not a word! That is because we Corsicans, you see, are a cunning race. My

sister realizes that she does not hold me completely in her power, and she does not choose to startle me while I may still escape her. Once she has led me to the edge of the precipice, and once I turn giddy there, she will thrust me into the abyss."

Then Orso gave Miss Nevil some details of his father's death, and recounted the principal proofs which had culminated in his belief that Agostini was the assassin.

"Nothing," he added, "has been able to convince Colomba. I saw that by her last letter. She has sworn the Barricini shall die, and—you see, Miss Nevil, what confidence I have in you!—they would not be alive now, perhaps, if one of the prejudices for which her uncivilized education must be the excuse had not convinced her that the execution of this vengeance belongs to me, as head of her family, and that my honour depends upon it!"

"Really and truly, Monsieur della Rebbia!" said Miss Nevil, "you slander your sister!"

"No. As you have said it yourself, she is a Corsican; she thinks as they all think. Do you know why I was so sad yesterday?"

"No. But for some time past you have been subject to these fits of sadness. You were much pleasanter in the earlier days of our acquaintance."

"Yesterday, on the contrary, I was more cheery and happy than I generally am. I had seen how kind, how indulgent, you were to my sister. The colonel and I were coming home in a boat. Do you know

what one of the boatmen said to me in his infernal *patois*? 'You've killed a deal of game, Ors' Anton', but you'll find Orlanduccio Barricini a better shot than you!'"

"Well, what was there so very dreadful in that remark? Are you so very much set upon being considered a skilful sportsman?"

"But don't you see the ruffian was telling me I shouldn't have courage to kill Orlanduccio!"

"Do you know, M. della Rebbia, you frighten me! The air of this island of yours seems not only to give people fevers, but to drive them mad. Luckily we shall be leaving it soon!"

"Not without coming to Pietranera—you have promised my sister that."

"And if we were to fail in that promise, we should bring down some terrible vengeance on our heads, no doubt!"

"Do you remember that story your father was telling us, the other day, about the Indians who threatened the company's agents that, if they would not grant their prayer, they would starve themselves to death?"

"That means that you would starve yourself to death! I doubt it very much! You would go hungry for one day, and then Mademoiselle Colomba would bring you such a tempting *bruccio* * that you would quite relinquish your plan."

"Your jests are cruel, Miss Nevil. You might

* A sort of baked cream cheese, a national dish in Corsica.

spare me. Listen, I am alone here; I have no one but you to prevent me from going mad, as you call it. You have been my guardian angel, and now——!"

"Now," said Miss Lydia gravely, "to steady this reason of yours, which is so easily shaken, you have the honour of a soldier and a man, and," she added, turning away to pluck a flower, "if that will be any help to you, you have the memory of your guardian angel, too!"

"Ah, Miss Nevil, if I could only think you really take some interest!"

"Listen, M. della Rebbia," said Miss Nevil, with some emotion. "As you are a child, I will treat you as I would treat a child. When I was a little girl my mother gave me a beautiful necklace, which I had longed for greatly; but she said to me, 'Every time you put on this necklace, remember you do not know French yet.' The necklace lost some of its value in my eyes, it was a source of constant self-reproach. But I wore it, and in the end I knew French. Do you see this ring? It is an Egyptian scarabæus, found, if you please, in a pyramid. That strange figure, which you may perhaps take for a bottle, stands for '*human life.*' There are certain people in my country to whom this hieroglyphic should appear exceedingly appropriate. This, which comes after it, is a shield upon an arm, holding a lance: that means *struggle, battle.* Thus the two characters, together, form this motto, which strikes me as a fine one, '*Life is a battle.*' Pray do not fancy I can translate hieroglyphics at sight! it was s

man learned in such matters who explained these to me. Here, I will give you my scarabæus. Whenever you feel some wicked Corsican thought stir in you, look at my talisman, and tell yourself you must win the battle our evil passions wage against us. Why, really, I don't preach at all badly!"

"I shall think of you, Miss Nevil, and I shall say to myself——"

"Say to yourself you have a friend who would be in despair at the idea of your being hanged—and besides it would be too distressing for your ancestors the corporals!"

With these words she dropped Orso's arm, laughing and running to her father.

"Papa," she said, "do leave those poor birds alone, and come and make up poetry with us, in Napoleon's grotto!"

CHAPTER VIII

THERE is always a certain solemnity about a departure, even when the separation is only to be a short one. Orso and his sister were to start very early in the morning, and he had taken his leave of Miss Lydia the night before—for he had no hope that she would disturb her indolent habits on his account. Their farewells had been cold and grave. Since that conversation on the sea-shore, Miss Lydia had been afraid she had perhaps shown too strong an interest in Orso, and on the other hand, her jests, and more especially her careless tone, lay heavy on Orso's heart. At one moment he had thought the young Englishwoman's manner betrayed a budding feeling of affection, but now, put out of countenance by her jests, he told himself she only looked on him as a mere acquaintance, who would be soon forgotten. Great, therefore, was his surprise, next morning, when, as he sat at coffee with the colonel, he saw Miss Lydia come into the room, followed by his sister. She had risen at five o'clock, and for an Englishwoman, and especially for Miss Nevil, the effort was so great that it could not but give him some cause for vanity.

"I am so sorry you should have disturbed yourself

so early," said Orso. "No doubt my sister woke you up in spite of all my injunctions, and you must hate us heartily! Perhaps you wish I was hanged already!"

"No," said Miss Lydia, very low and in Italian, evidently so that her father might not hear her, "but you were somewhat sulky with me yesterday, because of my innocent jokes, and I would not have you carry away an unpleasant recollection of your humble servant. What terrible people you are, you Corsicans! Well, good-bye! We shall meet soon, I hope."

And she held out her hand.

A sigh was the only answer Orso could find. Colomba came to his side, led him into a window, and spoke to him for a moment in an undertone, showing him something she held under her *mezzaro*.

"Mademoiselle," said Orso to Miss Nevil, "my sister is anxious to give you a very odd present, but we Corsicans have not much to offer—except our affection—which time never wipes out. My sister tells me you have looked with some curiosity at this dagger. It is an ancient possession in our family. It probably hung, once upon a time, at the belt of one of those corporals, to whom I owe the honour of your acquaintance. Colomba thinks it so precious that she has asked my leave to give it to you, and I hardly know if I ought to grant it, for I am afraid you'll laugh at us!"

"The dagger is beautiful," said Miss Lydia. "But it is a family weapon, I can not accept it!"

"It's not my father's dagger," exclaimed Colomba eagerly; "it was given to one of mother's ancestors by

King Theodore. If the signorina will accept it, she will give us great pleasure."

"Come, Miss Lydia," said Orso, "don't scorn a king's dagger!"

To a collector, relics of King Theodore are infinitely more precious than those of the most powerful of monarchs. The temptation was a strong one, and already Miss Lydia could see the effect the weapon would produce laid out on a lacquered table in her room at St. James's Place.

"But," said she, taking the dagger with the hesitating air of one who longs to accept, and casting one of her most delightful smiles on Colomba, "dear Signorina Colomba . . . I can not . . . I should not dare to let you depart thus, unarmed."

"My brother is with me," said Colomba proudly, "and we have the good gun your father has given us. Orso, have you put a bullet in it?"

Miss Nevil kept the dagger, and to avert the danger consequent on *giving* instruments that cut or pierce to a friend, Colomba insisted on receiving a soldo in payment.

A start had to be made at last. Yet once again Orso pressed Miss Nevil's hand, Colomba kissed her, and then held up her rosy lips to the colonel, who was enchanted with this Corsican politeness. From the window of the drawing-room Miss Lydia watched the brother and sister mount their horses. Colomba's eyes shone with a malignant joy which she had never remarked in them before. The sight of this tall strong

creature, with her fanatical ideas of savage honour, pride written on her forehead, and curled in a sardonic smile upon her lips, carrying off the young man with his weapons, as though on some death-dealing errand, recalled Orso's fears to her, and she fancied she beheld his evil genius dragging him to his ruin. Orso, who was already in the saddle, raised his head and caught sight of her. Either because he had guessed her thought, or desired to send her a last farewell, he took the Egyptian ring, which he had hung upon a ribbon, and carried it to his lips. Blushing, Miss Lydia stepped back from the window, then returning to it almost at once, she saw the two Corsicans cantering their little ponies rapidly toward the mountains. Half an hour later the colonel showed them to her, through his glasses, riding along the end of the bay, and she noticed that Orso constantly turned his head toward the town. At last he disappeared behind the marshes, the site of which is now filled by a flourishing nursery garden.

Miss Lydia glanced at herself in the glass, and thought she looked pale.

"What must that young man think of me," said she, "and what did I think of him? And why did I think about him? . . . A travelling acquaintance! . . . What have I come to Corsica for? . . . Oh! I don't care for him! . . . No! no! and besides the thing is impossible . . . And Colomba . . . Fancy me sister-in-law to a *voceratrice*, who wears a big dagger!"

And she noticed she was still holding King Theodore's dagger in her hand. She tossed it on to her toilette table. "Colomba, in London, dancing at Almacks! . . . Good heavens! what a lion * that would be, to show off! . . . Perhaps she'd make a great sensation! . . . He loves me, I'm certain of it! He is the hero of a novel, and I have interrupted his adventurous career. . . . But did he really long to avenge his father in true Corsican fashion? . . . He was something between a Conrad and a dandy . . . I've turned him into nothing but a dandy! . . . And a dandy with a Corsican tailor! . . ."

She threw herself on her bed, and tried to sleep—but that proved an impossibility, and I will not undertake to continue her soliloquy, during which she declared, more than a hundred times over, that Signor della Rebbia had not been, was not, and never should be, anything to her.

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* At this period this name was used in England for people who were the fashion because they had something extraordinary about them.

CHAPTER IX

MEANWHILE Orso was riding along beside his sister. At first the speed at which their horses moved prevented all conversation, but when the hills grew so steep that they were obliged to go at a foot's pace, they began to exchange a few words about the friends from whom they had just parted. Colomba spoke with admiration of Miss Nevil's beauty, of her golden hair, and charming ways. Then she asked whether the colonel was really as rich as he appeared, and whether Miss Lydia was his only child.

"She would be a good match," said she. "Her father seems to have a great liking for you——"

And as Orso made no response, she added: "Our family was rich, in days gone by. It is still one of the most respected in the island. All these *signori* about us are bastards.* The only noble blood left is in the families of the corporals, and as you know, Orso, your ancestors were the chief corporals in the island. You know our family came from beyond the hills,† and it

* The descendants of the feudal lords in Corsica are known as *signori*. There is a rivalry as regards birth between the *signori* and the *caporali*.

† Otherwise "from the eastern coast." The meaning of the expression "*di la dei monti*," which is in constant use, alters according

was the civil wars that forced us over to this side. If I were you, Orso, I shouldn't hesitate—I should ask Colonel Nevil for his daughter's hand." Orso shrugged his shoulders. "With her fortune, you might buy the Falsetta woods, and the vineyards below ours. I would build a fine stone house, and add a story to the old tower in which Sambucuccio killed so many Moors in the days of Count Henry, *il bel Missere*." *

"Colomba, you're talking nonsense," said Orso, cantering forward.

"You are a man, Ors' Anton', and of course you know what you ought to do better than any woman. But I should very much like to know what objection that Englishman could have to the marriage. Are there any corporals in England?"

After a somewhat lengthy ride, spent in talking in this fashion, the brother and sister reached a little village, not far from Bocognano, where they halted to dine and sleep at a friend's house. They were welcomed with a hospitality which must be experienced before it can be appreciated. The next morning, their host, who had stood godfather to a child to whom Madame della Rebbia had been godmother, accompanied them a league beyond his house.

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to the geographical position of the person who employs it. A chain of mountains runs right through Corsica from north to south.

* See Filippini, Book II. Count Arrigo bel Missere died towards the year 1000. The story goes that at his death a voice was heard in the air singing these prophetic words:

"E morto il Conte Arrigo bel Missere
E Corsica sarà di male in peggio!"

"Do you see those woods and thickets?" said he to Orso, just as they were parting. "A man who had met with a misfortune might live there peacefully for ten years, and no gendarme or soldier would ever come to look for him. The woods run into the Vizzavona forest, and anybody who has friends at Bocognano or in the neighbourhood would want for nothing. That's a good gun you have there. It must carry a long way. Blood of the Madonna! What calibre! You might kill better game than boars with it!"

Orso answered, coldly, that his gun was of English make, and carried "the lead" a long distance. The friends embraced, and took their different ways.

Our travellers were drawing quite close to Pietranera, when, at the entrance of a little gorge, through which they had to pass, they beheld seven or eight men, armed with guns, some sitting on stones, others lying on the grass, others standing up, and seemingly on the lookout. Their horses were grazing a little way off. Colomba looked at them for a moment, through a spy-glass which she took out of one of the large leathern pockets all Corsicans wear when on a journey.

"Those are our men!" she cried, with a well-pleased air. "Pieruccio has done his errand well!"

"What men?" inquired Orso.

"Our herdsmen," she replied. "I sent Pieruccio off yesterday evening to call the good fellows together, so that they may attend you home. It would not do for you to enter Pietranera without an escort, and be-

sides, you must know the Barricini are capable of anything!"

"Colomba," said Orso, and his tone was severe, "I have asked you, over and over again, not to mention the Barricini and your groundless suspicions to me. I shall certainly not make myself ridiculous by riding home with all these loafers behind me, and I am very angry with you for having sent for them without telling me."

"Brother, you have forgotten the ways of your own country. It is my business to protect you, when your own imprudence exposes you to danger. It was my duty to do what I have done."

Just at this moment the herdsmen, who had caught sight of them, hastened to their horses, and galloped down the hill to meet them.

"Evviva Ors' Anton'!" shouted a brawny, white-bearded old fellow, wrapped, despite the heat, in a hooded cloak of Corsican cloth, thicker than the skins of his own goats. "The image of his father, only taller and stronger! What a splendid gun! There'll be talk about that gun, Ors' Anton'!"

"Evvviva Ors' Anton'!" chorused the herdsmen. "We were sure you'd come back, at last!"

"Ah! Ors' Anton'!" cried a tall fellow, with a skin tanned brick red. "How happy your father would be, if he were here to welcome you! The dear, good man! You would have seen him now, if he would have listened to me—if he would have let me settle Guidice's business! . . . But he wouldn't

listen to me, poor fellow! He knows I was right, now!"

"Well, well!" said the old man. "Guidice will lose nothing by waiting."

"Evvviva Ors' Anton'!" And the reports of a dozen guns capped the plaudit.

Very much put out, Orso sat in the midst of the group of mounted men, all talking at once, and crowding round to shake hands with him. For some time he could not make himself heard. At last, with the air he put on when he used to reprimand the men of his company, or send one of them to the guard-room, he said:

"I thank you, friends, for the affection you show for me, and for that which you felt for my father! But I do not want advice from any of you, and you must not offer it. I know my own duty."

"He's right! he's right!" cried the herdsmen. "You know you may reckon on us!"

"Yes, I do reckon on you. But at this moment I need no help, and no personal danger threatens me. Now face round at once, and be off with you to your goats. I know my way to Pietranera, and I want no guides."

"Fear nothing, Ors' Anton'," said the old man. "They would never dare to show their noses to-day. The mouse runs back to its hole when the tom-cat comes out!"

"Tom-cat yourself, old gray-beard!" said Orso. "What's your name?"

"What! don't you remember me, Ors' Anton'? I who have so often taken you up behind me on that biting mule of mine! You don't remember Polo Griffo? I'm an honest fellow, though, and with the della Rebbia, body and soul. Say but the word, and when that big gun of yours speaks, this old musket of mine, as old as its master, shall not be dumb. Be sure of that, Ors' Anton'!"

"Well, well! But be off with you now, in the devil's name, and let us go on our way!"

At last the herdsmen departed, trotting rapidly off toward the village, but they stopped every here and there, at all the highest spots on the road, as though they were looking out for some hidden ambuscade, always keeping near enough to Orso and his sister to be able to come to their assistance if necessary. And old Polo Griffo said to his comrades:

"I understand him! I understand him! He'll not say what he means to do, but he'll do it! He's the born image of his father. Ah! you may say you have no spite against any one, my boy! But you've made your vow to Saint Nega.* Bravo! I wouldn't give a fig for the mayor's hide—there won't be the makings of a wineskin in it before the month is out!"

Preceded by this troop of skirmishers, the last descendant of the della Rebbia entered the village, and proceeded to the old mansion of his forefathers, the corporals. The Rebbianites, who had long been leader-

* This saint is not mentioned in the calendar. To make a vow to Saint Nega means to deny everything deliberately.

less, had gathered to welcome him, and those dwellers in the village who observed a neutral line of conduct all came to their doorsteps to see him pass by. The adherents of the Barricini remained inside their houses, and peeped out of the slits in their shutters.

The village of Pietranera is very irregularly built, like most Corsican villages—for indeed, to see a street, the traveller must betake himself to Cargese, which was built by Monsieur de Marbœuf. The houses, scattered irregularly about, without the least attempt at orderly arrangement, cover the top of a small plateau, or rather of a ridge of the mountain. Toward the centre of the village stands a great evergreen oak, and close beside it may be seen a granite trough, into which the water of a neighbouring spring is conveyed by a wooden pipe. This monument of public utility was constructed at the common expense of the della Rebbia and Barricini families. But the man who imagined this to be a sign of former friendship between the two families would be sorely mistaken. On the contrary, it is the outcome of their mutual jealousy. Once upon a time, Colonel della Rebbia sent a small sum of money to the Municipal Council of his commune to help to provide a fountain. The lawyer Barricini hastened to forward a similar gift, and to this generous strife Pietranera owes its water supply. Round about the evergreen oak and the fountain there is a clear space, known as "the Square," on which the local idlers gather every night. Sometimes they play at cards, and once a year, in Carnival-time, they dance.

At the two ends of the square stand two edifices, of greater height than breadth, built of a mixture of granite and schist. These are the *Towers* of the two opposing families, the Barricini and the della Rebbia. Their architecture is exactly alike, their height is similar, and it is quite evident that the rivalry of the two families has never been absolutely decided by any stroke of fortune in favor of either.

It may perhaps be well to explain what should be understood by this word, "Tower." It is a square building, some forty feet in height, which in any other country would be simply described as a pigeon-house. A narrow entrance-door, eight feet above the level of the ground, is reached by a very steep flight of steps. Above the door is a window, in front of which runs a sort of balcony, the floor of which is pierced with openings, like a machicolation, through which the inhabitants may destroy an unwelcome visitor without any danger to themselves. Between the window and the door are two escutcheons, roughly carved. One of these bears what was originally a Genoese cross, now so battered that nobody but an antiquary could recognise it. On the other are chiselled the arms of the family to whom the Tower belongs. If the reader will complete this scheme of decoration by imagining several bullet marks on the escutcheons and on the window frames, he will have a fair idea of a Corsican mansion, dating from the middle ages. I had forgotten to add that the dwelling-house adjoins the tower, and is frequently connected with it by some interior passage.

The della Rebbia house and tower stand on the northern side of the square at Pietranera. The Barricini house and tower are on the southern side. Since the colonel's wife had been buried, no member of either family had ever been seen on any side of the square, save that assigned by tacit agreement to its own party. Orso was about to ride past the mayor's house when his sister checked him, and suggested his turning down a lane that would take them to their own dwelling without crossing the square at all.

"Why should we go out of our way?" said Orso. "Doesn't the square belong to everybody?" and he rode on.

"Brave heart!" murmured Colomba. ". . . My father! you will be avenged!"

When they reached the square, Colomba put herself between her brother and the Barricini mansion, and her eyes never left her enemy's windows. She noticed that they had been lately barricaded and provided with *archere*. *Archere* is the name given to narrow openings like loopholes, made between the big logs of wood used to close up the lower parts of the windows. When an onslaught is expected, this sort of barricade is used, and from behind the logs the attacked party can fire at its assailants with ease and safety.

"The cowards!" said Colomba. "Look, brother, they have begun to protect themselves! They have put up barricades! But some day or other they'll have to come out."

Orso's presence on the southern side of the square

made a great sensation at Pietranera, and was taken to be a proof of boldness savouring of temerity. It was subject of endless comment on the part of the neutrals, when they gathered around the evergreen oak, that night.

"It is a good thing," they said, "that Barricini's sons are not back yet, for they are not so patient as the lawyer, and very likely they would not have let their enemy set his foot on their ground without making him pay for his bravado."

"Remember what I am telling you, neighbour," said an old man, the village oracle. "I watched Colomba's face to-day. She had some idea in her head. I smell powder in the air. Before long, butcher's meat will be cheap in Pietranera!"

CHAPTER X

Orso had been parted from his father at so early an age that he had scarcely had time to know him. He had left Pietranera to pursue his studies at Pisa when he was only fifteen. Thence he had passed into the military school, and Ghilfuccio, meanwhile, was bearing the Imperial Eagles all over Europe. On the mainland, Orso only saw his father at rare intervals, and it was not until 1815 that he found himself in the regiment he commanded. But the colonel, who was an inflexible disciplinarian, treated his son just like any other sub-lieutenant—in other words, with great severity. Orso's memories of him were of two kinds: He recollected him, at Pietranera, as the father who would trust him with his sword, and would let him fire off his gun when he came in from a shooting expedition, or who made him sit down, for the first time, tiny urchin as he was, at the family dinner-table. Then he remembered the Colonel della Rebbia who would put him under arrest for some blunder, and who never called him anything but Lieutenant della Rebbia.

"Lieutenant della Rebbia, you are not in your right place on parade. You will be confined to barracks three days."

"Your skirmishers are five yards too far from your main body—five days in barracks."

"It is five minutes past noon, and you are still in your forage-cap—a week in barracks."

Only once, at Quatre-Bras, he had said to him, "Well done, Orso! But be cautious!"

But, after all, these later memories were not connected in his mind with Pietranera. The sight of the places so familiar to him in his childish days, of the furniture he had seen used by his mother, to whom he had been fondly attached, filled his soul with a host of tender and painful emotions. Then the gloomy future that lay before him, the vague anxiety he felt about his sister, and, above all other things, the thought that Miss Nevil was coming to his house, which now struck him as being so small, so poor, so unsuited to a person accustomed to luxury—the idea that she might possibly despise it—all these feelings made his brain a chaos, and filled him with a sense of deep discouragement.

At supper he sat in the great oaken chair, blackened with age, in which his father had always presided at the head of the family table, and he smiled when he saw that Colomba hesitated to sit down with him. But he was grateful to her for her silence during the meal, and for her speedy retirement afterward. For he felt he was too deeply moved to be able to resist the attack she was no doubt preparing to make upon him. Colomba, however, was dealing warily with him, and meant to give him time to collect himself. He sat for

a long time motionless, with his head on his hand, thinking over the scenes of the last fortnight of his life. He saw, with alarm, how every one seemed to be watching what would be his behaviour to the Barricini. Already he began to perceive that the opinion of Pietranera was beginning to be the opinion of all the world to him. He would have to avenge himself, or be taken for a coward! But on whom was he to take vengeance? He could not believe the Barricini to be guilty of murder. They were his family enemies, certainly, but only the vulgar prejudice of his fellow-countrymen could accuse them of being murderers. Sometimes he would look at Miss Nevil's talisman, and whisper the motto "Life is a battle!" over to himself. At last, in a resolute voice, he said, "I will win it!" Strong in that thought, he rose to his feet, took up the lamp, and was just going up to his room, when he heard a knock at the door of the house. It was a very unusual hour for any visitor to appear. Colomba instantly made her appearance, followed by the woman who acted as their servant.

"It's nothing!" she said, hurrying to the door.

Yet before she opened it she inquired who knocked. A gentle voice answered, "It is I."

Instantly the wooden bar across the door was withdrawn, and Colomba reappeared in the dining-room, followed by a little ragged, bare-footed girl of about ten years old, her head bound with a shabby kerchief, from which escaped long locks of hair, as black as the raven's wing. The child was thin and pale, her skin was sunburnt, but her eyes shone with intelligence.

When she saw Orso she stopped shyly, and courtesied to him, peasant fashion—then she said something in an undertone to Colomba, and gave her a freshly killed pheasant.

"Thanks, Chili," said Colomba. "Thank your uncle for me. Is he well?"

"Very well, signorina, at your service. I couldn't come sooner because he was late. I waited for him in the *máquis* for three hours."

"And you've had no supper?"

"Why no, signorina! I've not had time."

"You shall have some supper here. Has your uncle any bread left?"

"Very little, signorina. But what he is most short of is powder. Now the chestnuts are in, the only other thing he wants is powder."

"I will give you a loaf for him, and some powder, too. Tell him to use it sparingly—it is very dear."

"Colomba," said Orso in French, "on whom are you bestowing your charity?"

"On a poor bandit belonging to this village," replied Colomba in the same language. "This little girl is his niece."

"It strikes me you might place your gifts better. Why should you send powder to a ruffian who will use it to commit crimes? But for the deplorable weakness every one here seems to have for the bandits, they would have disappeared out of Corsica long ago."

"The worst men in our country are not those who are 'in the country.'" *

"Give them bread, if it so please you. But I will not have you supply them with ammunition."

"Brother," said Colomba, in a serious voice, "you are master here, and everything in this house belongs to you. But I warn you that I will give this little girl my *mezzaro*, so that she may sell it, rather than refuse powder to a bandit. Refuse to give him powder! I might just as well make him over to the gendarmes! What has he to protect him against them, except his cartridges?"

All this while the little girl was ravenously devouring a bit of bread, and carefully watching Colomba and her brother, turn about, trying to read the meaning of what they were saying in their eyes.

"And what has this bandit of yours done? What crime has driven him into the *mâquis*?"

"Brandolaccio has not committed any crime," exclaimed Colomba. "He killed Giovan' Oppizo, who murdered his father while he was away serving in the army!"

Orso turned away his head, took up the lamp, and, without a word, departed to his bedroom. Then Colomba gave the child food and gunpowder, and went with her as far as the house-door, saying over and over again:

"Mind your uncle takes good care of Orso!"

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* To be *alla campagna*, otherwise to be a bandit. The word *bandit* is not a term of opprobrium; it is taken in the sense of *banished*, the *outlaw* of the old English ballads.

CHAPTER XI

It was long before Orso fell asleep, and as a consequence he woke late—late for a Corsican, at all events. When he left his bed, the first object that struck his gaze was the house of his enemies, and the *archere* with which they had furnished it. He went downstairs and asked for his sister.

"She is in the kitchen, melting bullets," answered Saveria, the woman-servant.

So he could not take a step without being pursued by the image of war.

He found Colomba sitting on a stool, surrounded by freshly cast bullets, and cutting up strips of lead.

"What the devil are you doing?" inquired her brother.

"You had no bullets for the colonel's gun," she answered, in her soft voice. "I found I had a mould for that calibre, and you shall have four-and-twenty cartridges to-day, brother."

"I don't need them, thank God!"

"You mustn't be taken at a disadvantage, Ors' Anton'. You have forgotten your country, and the people who are about you."

"If I had forgotten, you would soon have reminded

me. Tell me, did not a big trunk arrive here some days ago?"

"Yes, brother. Shall I take it up to your room?"

"You take it up! Why, you'd never be strong enough even to lift it! . . . Is there no man about who can do it?"

"I'm not so weak as you think!" said Colomba, turning up her sleeves, and displaying a pair of round white arms, perfect in shape, but looking more than ordinarily strong. "Here, Saveria," said she to the servant; "come and help me!"

She was already lifting the trunk alone, when Orso came hastily to her assistance.

"There is something for you in this trunk, my dear Colomba," said he. "You must excuse the modesty of my gifts. A lieutenant on half-pay hasn't a very well-lined purse!"

As he spoke, he opened the trunk, and took out of it a few gowns, a shawl, and some other things likely to be useful to a young girl.

"What beautiful things!" cried Colomba. "I'll put them away at once, for fear they should be spoiled. I'll keep them for my wedding," she added, with a sad smile, "for I am in mourning now!"

And she kissed her brother's hand.

"It looks affected, my dear sister, to wear your mourning for so long."

"I have sworn an oath," said Colomba resolutely, "I'll not take off my mourning. . . ." And her eyes were riveted on the Barricini mansion.

"Until your wedding day?" said Orso, trying to avoid the end of her sentence.

"I shall never marry any man," said Colomba, "unless he has done three things . . ." And her eyes still rested gloomily on the house of the enemy.

"You are so pretty, Colomba, that I wonder you are not married already! Come, you must tell me about your suitors. And besides, I'm sure to hear their serenades. They must be good ones to please a great *voceratrice* like you."

"Who would seek the hand of a poor orphan girl? . . . And then, the man for whom I would change my mourning-dress will have to make the women over there put on mourning!"

"This is becoming a perfect mania," said Orso to himself. But to avoid discussion he said nothing at all.

"Brother," said Colomba caressingly, "I have something to give you, too. The clothes you are wearing are much too grand for this country. Your fine cloth frock-coat would be in tatters in two days, if you wore it in the *mâquis*. You must keep it for the time when Miss Nevil comes."

Then, opening a cupboard, she took out a complete hunting dress.

"I've made you a velvet jacket, and here's a cap, such as our smart young men wear. I embroidered it for you, ever so long ago. Will you try them on?" And she made him put on a loose green velvet jacket, with a huge pocket at the back. On his head she set a

pointed black velvet cap, embroidered with jet and silk of the same colour, and finished with a sort of tassel.

"Here is our father's *carchera*," * she said. "His stiletto is in the pocket of the jacket. I'll fetch you his pistol."

"I look like a brigand at the Ambigu-Comique," said Orso, as he looked at himself in the little glass Saveria was holding up for him.

"Indeed you look first-rate, dressed like that, Ors' Anton'," said the old servant, "and the smartest *pinsuto* † in Bocognano or Bastelica is not braver."

Orso wore his new clothes at breakfast, and during that meal he told his sister that his trunk contained a certain number of books, that he was going to send to France and Italy for others, and intended she should study a great deal.

"For it really is disgraceful, Colomba," he added, "that a grown-up girl like you should still be ignorant of things that children on the mainland know as soon as they are weaned."

"You are quite right, brother," said Colomba. "I know my own shortcomings quite well, and I shall be too glad to learn—especially if you are kind enough to teach me."

Some days went by, and Colomba never mentioned the name of Barricini. She lavished care and attention

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* *Carchera*, a belt for cartridges. A pistol is worn fastened to the left side of it.

† *Pinsuto*, the name given to men who wear the pointed cap, *barreta pinsuta*.

on her brother, and often talked to him about Miss Nevil. Orso made her read French and Italian books, and was constantly being surprised either by the correctness and good sense of her comments, or by her utter ignorance on the most ordinary subjects.

One morning, after breakfast, Colomba left the room for a moment, and instead of returning as usual, with a book and some sheets of paper, reappeared with her *mezzaro* on her head. The expression of her countenance was even more serious than it generally was.

"Brother," she said, "I want you to come out with me."

"Where do you want me to go with you?" said Orso, holding out his arm.

"I don't want your arm, brother, but take your gun and your cartridge-pouch. A man should never go abroad without his arms."

"So be it. I must follow the fashion. Where are we going to?"

Colomba, without answering, drew her *mezzaro* closer about her head, called the watch-dog, and went out followed by her brother. Striding swiftly out of the village, she turned into a sunken road that wound among the vineyards, sending on the dog, to whom she made some gesture, which he seemed to understand, in front of her. He instantly began to run zigzag fashion, through the vines, first on one side and then on the other, always keeping within about fifty paces of his mistress, and occasionally stopping in the middle of the road and wagging his tail. He seemed to perform

his duties as a scout in the most perfect fashion imaginable.

"If Muschetto begins to bark, brother," said Colomba, "cock your gun, and stand still."

Half a mile beyond the village, after making many detours, Colomba stopped short, just where there was a bend in the road. On that spot there rose a little pyramid of branches, some of them green, some withered, heaped about three feet high. Above them rose the top of a wooden cross, painted black. In several of the Corsican cantons, especially those among the mountains, a very ancient custom, connected, it may be with some pagan superstition, constrains every passer-by to cast either a stone or a branch on the spot whereon a man has died a violent death. For years and years—as long as the memory of his tragic fate endures—this strange offering goes on accumulating from day to day.

This is called the dead man's *pile*—his "*mucchio*."

Colomba stopped before the heap of foliage, broke off an arbutus branch, and cast it on the pile.

"Orso," she said, "this is where your father died. Let us pray for his soul!"

And she knelt down. Orso instantly followed her example. At that moment the village church-bell tolled slowly for a man who had died during the preceding night. Orso burst into tears.

After a few minutes Colomba rose. Her eyes were dry, but her face was eager. She hastily crossed herself with her thumb, after the fashion generally adopted

by her compatriots, to seal any solemn oath, then, hurrying her brother with her, she took her way back to the village. They re-entered their house in silence. Orso went up to his room. A moment afterward Colomba followed him, carrying a small casket which she set upon the table. Opening it, she drew out a shirt, covered with great stains of blood.

"Here is your father's shirt, Orso!"

And she threw it across his knees. "Here is the lead that killed him!" And she laid two blackened bullets on the shirt.

"Orso! Brother!" she cried, throwing herself into his arms and clasping him desperately to her. "Orso, you will avenge him!"

In a sort of frenzy she kissed him, then kissed the shirt and the bullets, and went out of the room, leaving her brother sitting on his chair, as if he had been turned to stone. For some time Orso sat motionless, not daring to put the terrible relics away. At last, with an effort, he laid them back in their box, rushed to the opposite end of his room, and threw himself on his bed, with his face turned to the wall, and his head buried in his pillow, as though he were trying to shut out the sight of some ghost. His sister's last words rang unceasingly in his ears, like the words of an oracle, fatal, inevitable, calling out to him for blood, and for innocent blood! I shall not attempt to depict the unhappy young man's sensations, which were as confused as those that overwhelm a madman's brain. For a long time he lay in the same position, without daring to turn

his head. At last he got up, closed the lid of the casket, and rushed headlong out of the house, into the open country, moving aimlessly forward, whither he knew not.

By degrees, the fresh air did him good. He grew calmer, and began to consider his position, and his means of escape from it, with some composure. He did not, as my readers already know, suspect the Barricini of the murder, but he did accuse them of having forged Agostini's letter, and this letter, he believed, at any rate, had brought about his father's death. He felt it was impossible to prosecute them for the forgery. Now and then, when the prejudices or the instincts of his race assailed him, and suggested an easy vengeance —a shot fired at the corner of some path—the thought of his brother-officers, of Parisian drawing-rooms, and above all, of Miss Nevil, made him shrink from them in horror. Then his mind dwelt on his sister's reproaches, and all the Corsican within him justified her appeal, and even intensified its bitterness. One hope alone remained to him, in this battle between his conscience and his prejudices—the hope that, on some pretext or other, he might pick a quarrel with one of the lawyer's sons, and fight a duel with him. The idea of killing the young man, either by a bullet or a sword-thrust reconciled his French and Corsican ideas. This expedient adopted, he began to meditate means for its execution, and was feeling relieved already of a heavy burden, when other and gentler thoughts contributed still further to calm his feverish agitation. Cicero, in

his despair at the death of his daughter Tullia, forgot his sorrow when he mused over all the fine things he might say about it. Mr. Shandy consoled himself by discourses of the same nature for the loss of his son. Orso cooled his blood by thinking that he would depict his state of mind to Miss Nevil, and that such a picture could not fail to interest that fair lady deeply.

He was drawing near the village, from which he had unconsciously travelled a considerable distance, when he heard the voice of a little girl, who probably believed herself to be quite alone, singing in a path that ran along the edge of the *mâquis*. It was one of those slow, monotonous airs consecrated to funeral dirges, and the child was singing the words:

"And when my son shall see again the dwelling of his father,
Give him that murdered father's cross; show him my shirt blood-spattered."

"What's that you're singing, child?" said Orso, in an angry voice, as he suddenly appeared before her.

"Is that you, Ors' Anton'?" exclaimed the child, rather startled. "It is Signorina Colomba's song."

"I forbid you to sing it!" said Orso, in a threatening voice.

The child kept turning her head this way and that, as though looking about for a way of escape, and she would certainly have run off had she not been held back by the necessity of taking care of a large bundle which lay on the grass, at her feet.

Orso felt ashamed of his own vehemence. "What

are you carrying there, little one?" said he, with all the gentleness he could muster. And as Chilina hesitated, he lifted up the linen that was wrapped round the bundle, and saw it contained a loaf of bread and other food.

"To whom are you bringing the loaf, my dear?" he asked again.

"You know quite well, Ors' Anton': to my uncle."

"And isn't your uncle a bandit?"

"At your service, Ors' Anton'."

"If you met the gendarmes, they would ask you where you were going . . ."

"I should tell them," the child replied, at once, "that I was taking food to the men from Lucca who were cutting down the *mâquis*."

"And if you came across some hungry hunter who insisted on dining at your expense, and took your provisions away from you?"

"Nobody would dare! I would say they are for my uncle!"

"Well! he's not the sort of man to let himself be cheated of his dinner! . . . Is your uncle very fond of you?"

"Oh, yes, Ors' Anton'. Ever since my father died, he has taken care of my whole family—my mother and my little sister, and me. Before mother was ill, he used to recommend her to rich people, who gave her employment. The mayor gives me a frock every year, and the priest has taught me my catechism, and

how to read, ever since my uncle spoke to them about us. But your sister is kindest of all to us!"

Just at this moment a dog ran out on the pathway. The little girl put two of her fingers into her mouth and gave a shrill whistle, the dog came to her at once, fawned upon her, and then plunged swiftly into the thicket. Soon two men, ill-dressed, but very well armed, rose up out of a clump of young wood a few paces from where Orso stood. It was as though they had crawled up like snakes through the tangle of cytisus and myrtle that covered the ground.

"Oh, Ors' Anton', you're welcome!" said the elder of the two men. "Why, don't you remember me?"

"No!" said Orso, looking hard at him.

"Queer how a beard and a peaked cap alter a man! Come, monsieur, look at me well! Have you forgotten your old Waterloo men? Don't you remember Brando Savelli, who bit open more than one cartridge alongside of you on that unlucky day?"

"What! Is it you?" said Orso. "And you deserted in 1816!"

"Even so, sir. Faith! soldiering grows tiresome, and besides, I had a job to settle over in this country. Aha, Chili! you're a good girl! Give us our dinner at once, we're hungry. You've no notion what an appetite one gets in the *mâquis*. Who sent us this—was it Signorina Colomba or the mayor?"

"No, uncle, it was the miller's wife. She gave me this for you, and a blanket for my mother."

"What does she want of me?"

"She says the Lucchesi she hired to clear the *maquis* are asking her five-and-thirty sous, and chestnuts as well—because of the fever in the lower parts of Pietranera."

"The lazy scamps! . . . I'll see to them! . . . Will you share our dinner, monsieur, without any ceremony? We've eaten worse meals together, in the days of that poor compatriot of ours, whom they have discharged from the army."

"No, I thank you heartily. They have discharged me, too!"

"Yes, so I heard. But I'll wager you weren't sorry for it. You have your own account to settle too. . . . Come along, curé," said the bandit to his comrade. "Let's dine! Signor Orso, let me introduce the curé. I'm not quite sure he is a curé. But he knows as much as any priest, at all events!"

"A poor student of theology, monsieur," quoth the second bandit, "who has been prevented from following his vocation. Who knows, Brandolaccio, I might have been Pope!"

"What was it that deprived the Church of your learning?" inquired Orso.

"A mere nothing—a bill that had to be settled, as my friend Brandolaccio puts it. One of my sisters had been making a fool of herself, while I was devouring book-lore at Pisa University. I had to come home, to get her married. But her future husband was in too great a hurry; he died of fever three days before I arrived. Then I called, as you would have done in my

place, on the dead man's brother. I was told he was married. What was I to do?"

"It really was puzzling! What did you do?"

"It was one of those cases in which one has to resort to the gunflint." *

"In other words?"

"I put a bullet in his head," said the bandit coolly.

Orso made a horrified gesture. Nevertheless, curiosity, and, it may be, his desire to put off the moment when he must return home, induced him to remain where he was, and continue his conversation with the two men, each of whom had at least one murder on his conscience.

While his comrade was talking, Brandolaccio was laying bread and meat in front of him. He helped himself—then he gave some food to his dog, whom he introduced to Orso under the name of Brusco, as an animal possessing a wonderful instinct for recognising a soldier, whatever might be the disguise he had assumed. Lastly, he cut off a hunch of bread and a slice of raw ham, and gave them to his niece. "Oh, the merry life a bandit lives!" cried the student of theology, after he had swallowed a few mouthfuls. "You'll try it some day, perhaps, Signor della Rebbia, and you'll find out how delightful it is to acknowledge no master save one's own fancy!"

Hitherto the bandit had talked Italian. He now proceeded in French.

"Corsica is not a very amusing country for a young

* *La scaglia*, a very common expression.

man to live in—but for a bandit, there's the difference! The women are all wild about us. I, as you see me now, have three mistresses in three different villages. I am at home in every one of them, and one of the ladies is married to a gendarme!"

"You know many languages, monsieur!" said Orso gravely.

"If I talk French, 'tis because, look you, *maxima debetur pueris reverentia*! We have made up our minds, Brandolaccio and I, that the little girl shall turn out well, and go straight."

"When she is turned fifteen," remarked Chilina's uncle, "I'll find a good husband for her. I have one in my eye already."

"Shall you make the proposal yourself?" said Orso.

"Of course! Do you suppose that any well-to-do man in this neighbourhood, to whom I said, 'I should be glad to see a marriage between your son and Michilina Savelli,' would require any pressing?"

"I wouldn't advise him to!" quoth the other bandit. "Friend Brandolaccio has rather a heavy hand!"

"If I were a rogue," continued Brandolaccio, "a blackguard, a forger, I should only have to hold my wallet open, and the five-franc pieces would rain into it."

"Then is there something inside your wallet that attracts them?" said Orso.

"Nothing. But if I were to write to a rich man,

as some people have written, 'I want a hundred francs,' he would lose no time about sending them to me. But I'm a man of honour, monsieur."

"Do you know, Signor della Rebbia," said the bandit whom his comrade called the curé, "do you know that in this country, with all its simple habits, there are some wretches who make use of the esteem our passports" (and he touched his gun) "insure us, to draw forged bills in our handwriting?"

"I know it," said Orso, in a gruff tone; "but what bills?"

"Six months ago," said the bandit, "I was taking my walks abroad near Orezza, when a sort of lunatic came up to me, pulling off his cap to me even in the distance, and said: 'Oh, M. le Curé' (they always call me that), 'please excuse me—give me time. I have only been able to get fifty-five francs together! Honour bright, that's all I've been able to scrape up.' I, in my astonishment, said, 'Fifty-five francs! What do you mean, you rascal?' 'I mean sixty-five,' he replied; 'but as for the hundred francs you asked me to give you, it's not possible.' 'What! you villain! I ask you for a hundred francs? I don't know who you are.' Then he showed me a letter, or rather a dirty rag of paper, whereby he was summoned to deposit a hundred francs on a certain spot, on pain of having his house burned and his cows killed by Giocanto Castriconi—that's my name. And they had been vile enough to forge my signature! What annoyed me most was that the letter was written in *patois*, and was

full of mistakes in spelling—I who won every prize at the university! I began by giving my rascal a cuff that made him twist round and round. 'Aha! you take me for a thief, blackguard that you are!' I said, and I gave him a hearty kick, you know where. Then feeling rather better, I went on, 'When are you to take the money to the spot mentioned in the letter?' 'This very day.' 'Very good, then take it there!' It was at the foot of a pine-tree, and the place had been exactly described. He brought the money, buried it at the foot of the tree, and came and joined me. I had hidden myself close by. There I staid, with my man, for six mortal hours, M. della Rebbia. I'd have staid three days, if it had been necessary. At the end of six hours a *Bastiaccio*, a vile money-lender, made his appearance.* As he bent down to take up the money, I fired, and I had aimed so well that, as he fell, his head dropped upon the coins he was unearthing. 'Now, rascal,' said I to the peasant, 'take your money, and never dare to suspect Giocanto Castriconi of a mean trick again!'

"The poor devil, all of a tremble, picked up his sixty-five francs without taking the trouble to wipe them. He thanked me, I gave him a good parting kick, and he may be running away still, for all I know."

"Ah, curé!" said Brandolaccio, "I envy you that shot! How you must have laughed!"

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* The Corsican mountaineers loathe the inhabitants of Bastia, whom they do not consider their fellow-countrymen at all. They never say *Bastiese*. They always say *Bastiaccio*. It is well known that the termination *accio* generally indicates contempt.

"I had hit the money-lender in the temple," the bandit went on, "and that reminded me of Virgil's lines:

. . . "'Liquefacto tempora plumbo
Diffidit, ac multâ porrectum extendit arenâ.'

Liquefacto! Do you think, Signor Orso, that the rapidity with which a bullet flies through the air will melt it? You who have studied projectiles, tell me whether you think that idea is truth or fiction?"

Orso infinitely preferred discussing this question of physics to arguing with the licentiate as to the morality of his action. Brandolaccio, who did not find their scientific disquisition entertaining, interrupted it with the remark that the sun was just going to set.

"As you would not dine with us, Ors' Anton'," he said, "I advise you not to keep Mademoiselle Colomba waiting any longer. And then it is not always wise to be out on the roads after sunset. Why do you come out without a gun? There are bad folk about here—beware of them! You have nothing to fear to-day. The Barricini are bringing the prefect home with them. They have gone to meet him on the road, and he is to stop a day at Pietranera, before he goes on to Corte, to lay what they call a corner-stone—such stupid nonsense! He will sleep to-night with the Barricini; but to-morrow they'll be disengaged. There is Vincentello, who is a good-for-nothing fellow, and Orlanduccio, who is not much better. . . . Try to come on them separately, one to-day, the other to-morrow. . . . But be on the lookout, that's all I have to say to you!"

"Thanks for the warning," said Orso. "But there is no quarrel between us. Until they come to look for me, I shall have nothing to say to them."

The bandit stuck his tongue in his cheek, and smacked it ironically, but he made no reply. Orso got up to go away.

"By the way," said Brandolaccio, "I haven't thanked you for your powder. It came just when I needed it. Now I have everything I want . . . at least I do still want shoes . . . but I'll make myself a pair out of the skin of a moufflon one of these days."

Orso slipped two five-franc pieces into the bandit's hand.

"It was Colomba who sent you the powder. This is to buy the shoes."

"Nonsense, lieutenant!" cried Brandolaccio, handing him back the two coins. "D'ye take me for a beggar? I accept bread and powder, but I won't have anything else!"

"We are both old soldiers, so I thought we might have given each other a lift. Well, good-bye to you!"

But before he moved away he had slipped the money into the bandit's wallet, unperceived by him.

"Good-bye, Ors' Anton'," quoth the theologian. "We shall meet again in the *mâquis*, some day, perhaps, and then we'll continue our study of Virgil."

Quite a quarter of an hour after Orso had parted company with these worthies, he heard a man running after him, as fast as he could go. It was Brandolaccio.

"This is too bad, lieutenant!" he shouted breath-

lessly, "really it is too bad! I wouldn't overlook the trick, if any other man had played it on me. Here are your ten francs. All my respects to Mademoiselle Colomba. You have made me run myself quite out of breath. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XII

Orso found Colomba in a state of considerable anxiety because of his prolonged absence. But as soon as she saw him she recovered her usual serene, though sad, expression. During the evening meal the conversation turned on trivial subjects, and Orso, emboldened by his sister's apparent calm, related his encounter with the bandits, and even ventured on a joke or two concerning the moral and religious education that was being imparted to little Chilina, thanks to the care of her uncle and of his worthy colleague Signor Castriconi.

"Brandolaccio is an upright man," said Colomba; "but as to Castriconi, I have heard he is quite unprincipled."

"I think," said Orso, "that he is as good as Brandolaccio, and Brandolaccio is as good as he. Both of them are at open war with society. Their first crime leads them on to fresh ones, every day, and yet they are very likely not half so guilty as many people who don't live in the *mâquis*."

A flash of joy shone in his sister's eyes. "Yes," he continued, "these wretches have a code of honour of their own. It is a cruel prejudice, not a mean in-

stinct of greed, that has forced them into the life they are leading."

There was a silence.

"Brother," said Colomba, as she poured out his coffee, "perhaps you have heard that Carlo-Battista Pietri died last night. Yes, he died of the marsh-fever."

"Who is Pietri?"

"A man belonging to this village, the husband of Maddalena, who took the pocket-book out of our father's hand as he was dying. His widow has been here to ask me to join the watchers, and sing something. You ought to come, too. They are our neighbours, and in a small place like this we can not do otherwise than pay them this civility."

"Confound these wakes, Colomba! I don't at all like my sister to perform in public in this way."

"Orso," replied Colomba, "every country pays honour to its dead after its own fashion. The *ballata* has come down to us from our forefathers, and we must respect it as an ancient custom. Maddalena does not possess the 'gift,' and old Fiordispina, the best *voceratrice* in the country, is ill. They must have somebody for the *ballata*."

"Do you believe Carlo-Battista won't find his way safely into the next world unless somebody sings bad poetry over his bier? Go if you choose, Colomba—I'll go with you, if you think I ought. But don't improvise! It really is not fitting at your age, and—sister, I beg you not to do it!"

"Brother, I have promised. It is the custom here, as you know, and, I tell you again, there is nobody but me to improvise."

"An idiotic custom it is!"

"It costs me a great deal to sing in this way. It brings back all our own sorrows to me. I shall be ill after it, to-morrow. But I must do it. Give me leave to do it. Brother, remember that when we were at Ajaccio, you told me to improvise to amuse that young English lady who makes a mock of our old customs. So why should I not do it to-day for these poor people, who will be grateful to me, and whom it will help to bear their grief?"

"Well, well, as you will. I'll go bail you've composed your *ballata* already, and don't want to waste it."

"No, brother, I couldn't compose it beforehand. I stand before the dead person, and I think about those he has left behind him. The tears spring into my eyes, and then I sing whatever comes into my head."

All this was said so simply that it was quite impossible to suspect Signorina Colomba of the smallest poetic vanity. Orso let himself be persuaded, and went with his sister to Pietri's house. The dead man lay on a table in the largest room, with his face uncovered. All the doors and windows stood open, and several tapers were burning round the table. At the head stood the widow, and behind her a great many women, who filled all one side of the room. On the other side were the men, in rows, bareheaded, with their eyes fixed on the corpse, all in the deepest silence. Each new

arrival went up to the table, kissed the dead face,* bowed his or her head to the widow and her son, and joined the circle, without uttering a word. Nevertheless, from time to time one of the persons present would break the solemn silence with a few words, addressed to the dead man.

"Why has thou left thy good wife?" said one old crone. "Did she not take good care of thee? What didst thou lack? Why not have waited another month? Thy daughter-in-law would have borne thee a grandson!" A tall young fellow, Pietri's son, pressed his father's cold hand and cried: "Oh! why hast thou not died of the *mala morte*? † Then we could have avenged thee!"

These were the first words to fall on Orso's ear as he entered the room. At the sight of him the circle parted, and a low murmur of curiosity betrayed the expectation roused in the gathering by the *voceratrice's* presence. Colomba embraced the widow, took one of her hands, and stood for some moments wrapped in meditation, with her eyelids dropped. Then she threw back her *mezzaro*, gazed fixedly at the corpse, and bending over it, her face almost as waxen as that of the dead man, she began thus:

"Carlo-Battista! May Christ receive thy soul! . . . To live is to suffer! Thou goest to a place . . . where there is neither sun nor cold. . . . No longer dost thou need thy pruning-hook . . . nor thy heavy pick. . . .

* This custom still exists at Bocognano (1840).

† *La mala morte*, a violent death.

There is no more work for thee! . . . Henceforward all thy days are Sundays! . . . Carlo-Battista! May Christ receive thy soul! . . . Thy son rules in thy house. . . . I have seen the oak fall, . . . dried up by the *libeccio*. . . . I thought it was dead indeed, . . . but when I passed it again, its root . . . had thrown up a sapling. . . . The sapling grew into an oak . . . of mighty shade. . . . Under its great branches, Maddele, rest thee well! . . . And think of the oak that is no more!"

Here Maddalena began to sob aloud, and two or three men who, on occasion, would have shot at a Christian as coolly as at a partridge, brushed big tears off their sunburnt faces.

For some minutes Colomba continued in this strain, addressing herself sometimes to the corpse, sometimes to the family, and sometimes, by a personification frequently employed in the *ballata*, making the dead man himself speak words of consolation or counsel to his kinsfolk. As she proceeded, her face assumed a sublime expression, a delicate pink tinge crept over her features, heightening the brilliancy of her white teeth and the lustre of her flashing eyes. She was like a Pythoness on her tripod. Save for a sigh here and there, or a strangled sob, not the slightest noise rose from the assembly that crowded about her. Orso, though less easily affected than most people by this wild kind of poetry, was soon overcome by the general emotion. Hidden in a dark corner of the room, he wept as heartily as Pietri's own son.

Suddenly a slight stir was perceptible among the audience. The circle opened, and several strangers entered. The respect shown them, and the eagerness with which room was made for them, proved them to be people of importance, whose advent was a great honour to the household. Nevertheless, out of respect for the *ballata*, nobody said a word to them. The man who had entered first seemed about forty years of age. From his black coat, his red rosette, his confident air, and look of authority, he was at once guessed to be the prefect. Behind him came a bent old man with a bilious-looking complexion, whose furtive and anxious glance was only partially concealed by his green spectacles. He wore a black coat, too large for him, and which, though still quite new, had evidently been made several years previously. He always kept close beside the prefect and looked as though he would fain hide himself under his shadow. Last of all, behind him, came two tall young men, with sunburnt faces, their cheeks hidden by heavy whiskers, proud and arrogant-looking, and showing symptoms of an impertinent curiosity. Orso had had time to forget the faces of his village neighbours; but the sight of the old man in green spectacles instantly called up old memories in his mind. His presence in attendance on the prefect sufficed to insure his recognition. This was Barricini, the lawyer, mayor of Pietranera, who had come, with his two sons, to show the prefect what a *ballata* was. It would be difficult exactly to describe what happened within Orso's soul at that moment, but the presence of

his father's foe filled him with a sort of horror, and more than ever he felt inclined to yield to the suspicions with which he had been battling for so long.

As to Colomba, when she saw the man against whom she had sworn a deadly hatred, her mobile countenance assumed a most threatening aspect. She turned pale, her voice grew hoarse, the line she had begun to declaim died on her lips. But soon, taking up her *ballata* afresh, she proceeded with still greater vehemence.

"When the hawk bemoans himself . . . beside his harried nest, . . . the starlings flutter round him . . . insulting his distress."

A smothered laugh was heard. The two young men who had just come in doubtless considered the metaphor too bold.

"The falcon will rouse himself. . . . He will spread his wings. . . . He will wash his beak in blood! . . . Now, to thee, Carlo-Battista, let thy friends . . . bid an eternal farewell! . . . Long enough have their tears flowed! . . . Only the poor orphan girl will not weep for thee! . . . Wherefore should she moan? . . . Thou hast fallen asleep, full of years, . . . in the midst of thine own kin, . . . ready to appear . . . in the presence of the Almighty. . . . The orphan weeps for her father . . . overtaken by vile murderers, . . . struck from behind. . . . For her father, whose blood lies red . . . beneath the heaped-up green leaves. . . . But she has gathered up this blood, . . . this innocent and noble blood! . . . She has poured it out over Pietra-

nera . . . that it may become a deadly poison. . . . And the mark shall be on Pietranera . . . until the blood of the guilty . . . shall have wiped out the blood of the innocent man!"

As Colomba pronounced the last words, she dropped into a chair, drew her *mezzaro* over her face, and was heard sobbing beneath it. The weeping women crowded round the *improvisatrice*; several of the men were casting savage glances at the mayor and his sons; some of the elders began to protest against the scandal to which their presence had given rise. The dead man's son pushed his way through the throng, and was about to beg the mayor to clear out with all possible speed. But this functionary had not waited for the suggestion. He was on his way to the door, and his two sons were already in the street. The prefect said a few words of condolence to young Pietri, and followed them out, almost immediately. Orso went to his sister's side, took her arm, and drew her out of the room.

"Go with them," said young Pietri to some of his friends. "Take care no harm comes to them!"

Hastily two or three young men slipped their stilettos up the left sleeves of their jackets and escorted Orso and his sister to their own door.

CHAPTER XIII

PANTING, exhausted, Colomba was utterly incapable of uttering a single word. Her head rested on her brother's shoulder, and she clasped one of his hands tightly between her own. Orso, though secretly somewhat annoyed by her peroration, was too much alarmed to reprove her, even in the mildest fashion. He was silently waiting till the nervous attack from which she seemed to be suffering should have passed, when there was a knock at the door, and Saveria, very much flustered, announced the prefect. At the words, Colomba rose, as though ashamed of her weakness, and stood leaning on a chair, which shook visibly beneath her hand.

The prefect began with some commonplace apology for the unseasonable hour of his visit, condoled with Mademoiselle Colomba, touched on the danger connected with strong emotions, blamed the custom of composing funeral dirges, which the very talent of the *voceratrice* rendered the more harrowing to her auditors, skilfully slipped in a mild reproof concerning the tendency of the improvisation just concluded, and then, changing his tone—

"M. della Rebbia," he said, "I have many mes-

sages for you from your English friends. Miss Nevil sends her affectionate regards to your sister. I have a letter for you from her."

"A letter from Miss Nevil!" cried Orso.

"Unluckily I have not got it with me. But you shall have it within five minutes. Her father has not been well. For a little while we were afraid he had caught one of our terrible fevers. Luckily he is all right again, as you will observe for yourself, for I fancy you will see him very soon."

"Miss Nevil must have been very much alarmed!"

"Fortunately she did not become aware of the danger till it was quite gone by. M. della Rebbia, Miss Nevil has talked to me a great deal about you and about your sister."

Orso bowed.

"She has a great affection for you both. Under her charming appearance, and her apparent frivolity, a fund of good sense lies hidden."

"She is a very fascinating person," said Orso.

"I have come here, monsieur, almost at her prayer. Nobody is better acquainted than I with a fatal story which I would fain not have to recall to you. As M. Barricini is still the mayor of Pietranera, and as I am prefect of the department, I need hardly tell you what weight I attach to certain suspicions which, if I am rightly informed, some incautious individuals have communicated to you, and which you, I know, have spurned with the indignation your position and your character would have led me to expect."

"Colomba," said Orso, moving uneasily on his chair. "You are very tired. You had better go to bed."

Colomba shook her head. She had recovered all her usual composure, and her burning eyes were fixed on the prefect.

"M. Barricini," the prefect continued, "is exceedingly anxious to put an end to the sort of enmity . . . or rather, the condition of uncertainty, existing between yourself and him. . . . On my part, I should be delighted to see you both in those relations of friendly intercourse appropriate to people who certainly ought to esteem each other."

"Monsieur," replied Orso in a shaking voice, "I have never charged Barricini with my father's murder. But he committed an act which must always prevent me from having anything to do with him. He forged a threatening letter, in the name of a certain bandit, or at least he hinted in an underhand sort of way that it was forged by my father. That letter, monsieur, was probably the indirect cause of my father's death."

The prefect sat thinking for a moment.

"That your father should have believed that, when his own hasty nature led him into a lawsuit with Signor Barricini, is excusable. But such blindness on your part really can not be admitted. Pray consider that Barricini could have served no interest of his own by forging the letter. I will not talk to you about his character, for you are not acquainted with it, and are

prejudiced against it; but you can not suppose that a man conversant with the law——"

"But, monsieur," said Orso, rising to his feet, "be good enough to recollect that when you tell me the letter was not Barricini's work, you ascribe it to my father. And my father's honour, monsieur, is mine!"

"No man on earth, sir, is more convinced of Colonel della Rebbia's honour than myself! But the writer of the letter is now known."

"Who wrote it?" exclaimed Colomba, making a step toward the prefect.

"A villain, guilty of several crimes—such crimes as you Corsicans never pardon—a thief, one Tomaso Bianchi, at present confined in the prison at Bastia, has acknowledged that he wrote the fatal letter."

"I know nothing of the man," said Orso. "What can have been his object?"

"He belongs to this neighbourhood," said Colomba. "He is brother to a man who was our miller —a scamp and a liar, unworthy of belief."

"You will soon see what his interest in the matter was," continued the prefect. "The miller of whom your sister speaks—I think his name was Teodoro—was the tenant of a mill belonging to the colonel, standing on the very stream the ownership of which M. Barricini was disputing with your father. The colonel, always a generous man, made very little profit out of the mill. Now Tomaso thought that if Barricini got possession of the stream there would be a heavy rent to pay, for it is well known that Barricini is rather fond

of money. In short, to oblige his brother, Tomaso forged the letter from the bandit—and there's the whole story. You know that in Corsica the strength of the family tie is so great that it does sometimes lead to crime. Please read over this letter to me from the attorney-general. It confirms what I have just told you."

Orso looked through the letter, which gave a detailed relation of Tomaso's confession, and Colomba read it over his shoulder.

When she had come to the end of it she exclaimed:

"Orlanduccio Barricini went down to Bastia a month ago, when it became known that my brother was coming home. He must have seen Tomaso, and bought this lie of him!"

"Signorina," said the prefect, out of patience, "you explain everything by odious imputations! Is that the way to find out the truth? You, sir, can judge more coolly. Tell me what you think of the business now? Do you believe, like this young lady, that a man who has only a slight sentence to fear would deliberately charge himself with forgery, just to oblige a person he doesn't know?"

Orso read the attorney-general's letter again, weighing every word with the greatest care—for now that he had seen the old lawyer, he felt it more difficult to convince himself than it would have been a few days previously. At last he found himself obliged to admit that the explanation seemed to him to be satisfactory. But Colomba cried out vehemently:

"Tomaso Bianchi is a knave! He'll not be convicted, or he'll escape from prison! I am certain of it!"

The prefect shrugged his shoulders.

"I have laid the information I have received before you, monsieur. I will now depart, and leave you to your own reflections. I shall wait till your own reason has enlightened you, and I trust it may prove stronger than your sister's suppositions."

Orso, after saying a few words of excuse for Colomba, repeated that he now believed Tomaso to be the sole culprit.

The prefect had risen to take his leave.

"If it were not so late," said he, "I would suggest your coming over with me to fetch Miss Nevil's letter. At the same time you might repeat to M. Barricini what you have just said to me, and the whole thing would be settled."

"Orso della Rebbia will never set his foot inside the house of a Barricini!" exclaimed Colomba impetuously.

"This young lady appears to be the *tintinajo* * of the family!" remarked the prefect, with a touch of irony.

"Monsieur," replied Colomba resolutely, "you are deceived. You do not know the lawyer. He is the most cunning and knavish of men. I beseech you not

* This is the name given to the ram or he-goat which wears a bell and leads the flock, and it is applied, metaphorically, to any member of a family who guides it in all important matters.

to make Orso do a thing that would overwhelm him with dishonour!"

"Colomba!" exclaimed Orso, "your passion has driven you out of your senses!"

"Orso! Orso! By the casket I gave you, I beseech you to listen to me! There is blood between you and the Barricini. You shall not go into their house!"

"Sister!"

"No, brother, you shall not go! Or I will leave this house, and you will never see me again! Have pity on me, Orso!" and she fell on her knees.

"I am grieved," said the prefect, "to find Mademoiselle Colomba so unreasonable. You will convince her, I am sure."

He opened the door and paused, seeming to expect Orso to follow him.

"I can not leave her now," said Orso. "To-morrow, if——"

"I shall be starting very early," said the prefect.

"Brother," cried Colomba, clasping her hands, "wait till to-morrow morning, in any case. Let me look over my father's papers. You can not refuse me that!"

"Well, you shall look them over to-night. But at all events you shall not torment me afterward with your violent hatreds. A thousand pardons, monsieur! I am so upset myself to-night—it had better be to-morrow."

"The night brings counsel," said the prefect, as

he went out. "I hope all your uncertainty will have disappeared by to-morrow."

"Saveria," Colomba called, "take the lantern and attend the Signor Prefetto. He will give you a letter to bring back to my brother."

She added a few words which reached Saveria's ear alone.

"Colomba," said Orso, when the prefect was gone, "you have distressed me very much. Will no evidence convince you?"

"You have given me till to-morrow," she replied. "I have very little time; but I still have some hope."

Then she took a bunch of keys and ran up to a room on the upper story. There he could hear her pulling open drawers, and rummaging in the writing-desk in which Colonel della Rebbia had kept his business papers.

CHAPTER XIV

Saveria was a long time away, and when she at last reappeared, carrying a letter, and followed by little Chilina, rubbing her eyes, and evidently just waked out of her beauty sleep, Orso was wound up to the highest possible pitch of impatience.

"Child," said Orso, "what are you doing here at this hour?"

"The signorina sent for me," replied Chilina.

"What the devil does she want with her?" thought Orso to himself. But he was in a hurry to open Miss Lydia's letter, and while he was reading it Chilina went upstairs to his sister's room.

"My father, dear sir, has not been well," Miss Nevil wrote, "and he is so indolent, besides, that I am obliged to act as his secretary. You remember that, instead of admiring the landscape with you and me the other day, he got his feet wet on the sea-shore—and in your delightful island, that is quite enough to give one a fever! I can see the face you are making! No doubt you are feeling for your dagger. But I will hope you have none now. Well, my father had a little fever, and I had a great fright. The prefect, whom I still persist

in thinking very pleasant, sent us a doctor, also a very pleasant man, who got us over our trouble in two days. There has been no return of the attack, and my father would like to begin to shoot again. But I have forbidden that. How did you find matters in your mountain home? Is your North Tower still in its old place? Are there any ghosts about it? I ask all these questions because my father remembers you have promised him buck and boar and moufflon—is that the right name for those strange creatures? We intend to crave your hospitality on our way to Bastia, where we are to embark, and I trust the della Rebbia Castle, which you declare is so old and tumble-down, will not fall in upon our heads! Though the prefect is so pleasant that subjects of conversation are never lacking to us—I flatter myself, by the way, that I have turned his head—we have been talking about your worshipful self. The legal people at Bastia have sent him certain confessions, made by a rascal they have under lock and key, which are calculated to destroy your last remaining suspicions. The enmity which sometimes alarmed me for you must therefore end at once. You have no idea what a pleasure this has been to me! When you started hence with the fair *voceratrice*, with your gun in hand, and your brow lowering, you struck me as being more Corsican than ever — too Corsican indeed! *Basta!* I write you this long letter because I am dull. The prefect, alas! is going away. We will send you a message when we start for your mountains, and I shall take the liberty of writing to Signorina Colomba to

ask her to give me a *bruccio, ma solenne*! Meanwhile, give her my love. I use her dagger a great deal to cut the leaves of a novel I brought with me. But the doughty steel revolts against such usage, and tears my book for me, after a most pitiful fashion. Farewell, sir! My father sends you 'his best love.' Listen to what the prefect says. He is a sensible man, and is turning out of his way, I believe, on your account. He is going to lay a foundation-stone at Corte. I should fancy the ceremony will be very imposing, and I am very sorry not to see it. A gentleman in an embroidered coat and silk stockings and a white scarf, wielding a trowel—and a speech! And at the end of the performance manifold and reiterated shouts of 'God save the King.' I say again, sir, it will make you very vain to think I have written you four whole pages, and on that account I give you leave to write me a very long letter. By the way, I think it very odd of you not to have let me hear of your safe arrival at the Castle of Pietranera!

"LYDIA.

"P. S.—I beg you will listen to the prefect, and do as he bids you. We have agreed that this is the course you should pursue, and I shall be very glad if you do it."

Orso read the letter three or four times over, making endless mental comments each time as he read. Then he wrote a long answer, which he sent by Saveria's hand to a man in the village, who was to go down to Ajaccio the very next day. Already he had almost dismissed the idea of discussing his grievance.

true or false, against the Barricini, with his sister. Miss Lydia's letter had cast a rose-coloured tint over everything about him. He felt neither hatred nor suspicion now. He waited some time for his sister to come down, and finding she did not reappear, he went to bed, with a lighter heart than he had carried for many a day. Colomba, having dismissed Chilina with some secret instructions, spent the greater part of the night in reading old papers. A little before daybreak a few tiny pebbles rattled against the window-pane. At the signal, she went down to the garden, opened a back door, and conducted two very rough men into her house. Her first care was to bring them into the kitchen and give them food. My readers will shortly learn who these men were.

CHAPTER XV

TOWARD six o'clock next morning one of the prefect's servants came and knocked at the door of Orso's house. He was received by Colomba, and informed her the prefect was about to start, and was expecting her brother. Without a moment's hesitation Colomba replied that her brother had just had a fall on the stairs, and sprained his foot; that he was unable to walk a single step, that he begged the prefect to excuse him, and would be very grateful if he would condescend to take the trouble of coming over to him. A few minutes after this message had been despatched, Orso came downstairs, and asked his sister whether the prefect had not sent for him.

With the most perfect assurance she rejoined:

"He begs you'll wait for him here."

Half an hour went by without the slightest perceptible stir in the Barricini dwelling. Meanwhile Orso asked Colomba whether she had discovered anything. She replied that she proposed to make her statement when the prefect came. She affected an extreme composure. But her colour and her eyes betrayed her state of feverish excitement.

At last the door of the Barricini mansion was seen

to open. The prefect came out first, in travelling garb; he was followed by the mayor and his two sons. What was the stupefaction of the inhabitants of the village of Pietranera, who had been on the watch since sunrise for the departure of the chief magistrate of their department, when they saw him go straight across the square and enter the della Rebbia dwelling, accompanied by the three Barricini. "They are going to make peace!" exclaimed the village politicians.

"Just as I told you," one old man went on. "Ors' Anton' has lived too much on the mainland to carry things through like a man of mettle."

"Yet," responded a Rebbianite, "you may notice it is the Barricini who have gone across to him. They are suing for mercy."

"It's the prefect who has wheedled them all round," answered the old fellow. "There is no such thing as courage nowadays, and the young chaps make no more fuss about their father's blood than if they were all bastards."

The prefect was not a little astounded to find Orso up and walking about with perfect ease. In the briefest fashion Colomba avowed her own lie, and begged him to forgive it.

"If you had been staying anywhere else, monsieur, my brother would have gone to pay his respects to you yesterday."

Orso made endless apologies, vowing he had nothing to do with his sister's absurd stratagem, by which

he appeared deeply mortified. The prefect and the elder Barricini appeared to believe in the sincerity of his regret, and indeed this belief was justified by his evident confusion and the reproaches he addressed to his sister. But the mayor's two sons did not seem satisfied.

"We are being made to look like fools," said Orlanduccio audibly.

"If my sister were to play me such tricks," said Vincentello, "I'd soon cure her fancy for beginning them again."

The words, and the tone in which they were uttered, offended Orso, and diminished his good-will. Glances that were anything but friendly were exchanged between him and the two young men.

Meanwhile, everybody being seated save Colomba, who remained standing close to the kitchen door, the prefect took up his parable, and after a few commonplaces as to local prejudices, he recalled the fact that the most inveterate enmities generally have their root in some mere misunderstanding. Next, turning to the mayor, he told him that Signor della Rebbia had never believed the Barricini family had played any part, direct or indirect, in the deplorable event which had bereft him of his father; that he had, indeed, nursed some doubts as to one detail in the lawsuit between the two families; that Signor Orso's long absence, and the nature of the information sent him, excused the doubt in question; that in the light of recent revelations he felt completely satisfied, and desired to

re-open friendly and neighbourly relations with Signor Barricini and his sons.

Orso bowed stiffly. Signor Barricini stammered a few words that nobody could hear, and his sons stared steadily at the ceiling rafters. The prefect was about to continue his speech, and address the counterpart of the remarks he had made to Signor Barricini, to Orso, when Colomba stepped gravely forward between the contracting parties, at the same time drawing some papers from beneath her neckerchief.

"I should be happy indeed," she said, "to see the quarrel between our two families brought to an end. But if the reconciliation is to be sincere, there must be a full explanation, and nothing must be left in doubt. Signor Prefetto, Tomaso Bianchi's declaration, coming from a man of such vile report, seemed to me justly open to doubt. I said your sons had possibly seen this man in the prison at Bastia."

"It's false!" interrupted Orlanduccio; "I didn't see him!"

Colomba cast a scornful glance at him, and proceeded with great apparent composure.

"You explained Tomaso's probable interest in threatening Signor Barricini, in the name of a dreaded bandit, by his desire to keep his brother Teodoro in possession of the mill which my father allowed him to hire at a very low rent."

"That's quite clear," assented the prefect.

"Where was Tomaso Bianchi's interest?" exclaimed Colomba triumphantly. "His brother's lease

had run out. My father had given him notice on the 1st of July. Here is my father's account-book; here is his note of the warning given to Teodoro, and the letter from a business man at Ajaccio suggesting a new tenant."

As she spoke she gave the prefect the papers she had been holding in her hand.

There was an astonished pause. The mayor turned visibly pale. Orso, knitting his brows, leaned forward to look at the papers, which the prefect was perusing most attentively.

"We are being made to look like fools!" cried Orlanduccio again, springing angrily to his feet. "Let us be off, father! We ought never to have come here!"

One instant's delay gave Signor Barricini time to recover his composure. He asked leave to see the papers. Without a word the prefect handed them over to him. Pushing his green spectacles up to his forehead, looked through them with a somewhat indifferent air, while Colomba watched him with the eyes of a tigress who sees a buck drawing near to the lair where she has hidden her cubs.

"Well," said Signor Barricini, as he pulled down his spectacles and returned the documents, "knowing the late colonel's kind heart, Tomaso thought—most likely he thought—that the colonel would change his mind about the notice. As a matter of fact, Bianchi is still at the mill, so——"

"It was I," said Colomba, and there was scorn in

her voice, "who left him there. My father was dead, and situated as I was, I was obliged to treat my brother's dependents with consideration."

"Yet," quoth the prefect, "this man Tomaso acknowledges that he wrote the letter. That much is clear."

"The thing that is clear to me," broke in Orso, "is that there is some vile infamy underneath this whole business."

"I have to contradict another assertion made by these gentlemen," said Colomba.

She threw open the door into the kitchen and instantly Brandolaccio, the licentiate in theology, and Brusco, the dog, marched into the room. The two bandits were unarmed—apparently, at all events; they wore their cartridge belts, but the pistols, which are their necessary complement, were absent. As they entered the room they doffed their caps respectfully.

The effect produced by their sudden appearance may be conceived. The mayor almost fell backward. His sons threw themselves boldly in front of him, each one feeling for his dagger in his coat pocket. The prefect made a step toward the door, and Orso, seizing Brandolaccio by the collar, shouted:

"What have you come here for, you villain?"

"This is a trap!" cried the mayor, trying to get the door open. But, by the bandits' orders, as was afterward discovered, Saveria had locked it on the outside.

"Good people," said Brandolaccio, "don't be

afraid of me. I'm not such a devil as I look. We mean no harm at all. Signor Prefetto, I'm your very humble servant. Gently, lieutenant! you're strangling me! We're here as witnesses! Now then, Padre, speak up! Your tongue's glib enough!"

"Signor Prefetto," quoth the licentiate, "I have not the honour of being known to you. My name is Giocanto Castriconi, better known as the Padre. Aha, it's coming back to you! The signorina here, whom I have not the pleasure of knowing either, has sent to ask me to supply some information about a fellow of the name of Tomaso Bianchi, with whom I chanced to be shut up, about three weeks ago, in the prison at Bastia. This is what I have to tell you."

"Spare yourself the trouble," said the prefect. "I can not listen to anything from such a man as you. Signor della Rebbia, I am willing to believe you have had nothing to do with this detestable plot. But are you master in your own house? Will you have that door opened? Your sister may have to give an account of the strange relations in which she lives with a set of bandits."

"Signor Prefetto!" cried Colomba, "I beseech you to listen to what this man has to say! You are here to do justice to everybody, and it is your duty to search out the truth. Speak, Giocanto Castriconi!"

"Don't listen to him," chorused the three Barricini.

"If everybody talks at once," remarked the bandit, with a smile, "nobody can contrive to hear what

anybody says. Well, in the prison at Bastia I had as my companion—not as my friend—this very man, Tomaso. He received frequent visits from Signor Orlanduccio."

"You lie!" shouted the two brothers together.

"Two negatives make an affirmative," pursued Castriconi coolly. "Tomaso had money, he ate and drank of the best. I have always been fond of good cheer (that's the least of my failings), and in spite of my repugnance to rubbing shoulders with such a wretch, I let myself be tempted, several times over, into dining with him. Out of gratitude, I proposed he should escape with me. A young person—to whom I had shown some kindness—had provided me with the necessary means. I don't intend to compromise anybody. Tomaso refused my offer, telling me he was certain to be all right, as lawyer Barricini had spoken to all the judges for him, and he was sure to get out of prison with a character as white as snow, and with money in his pocket, too. As for me, I thought it better to get into the fresh air. *Dixi.*"

"Everything that fellow has said is a heap of lies," reiterated Orlanduccio stoutly. "If we were in the open country, and each of us had his gun, he wouldn't talk in that way."

"Here's a pretty folly!" cried Brandolaccio. "Don't you quarrel with the Padre, Orlanduccio!"

"Will you be good enough to allow me to leave this room, Signor della Rebbia," said the prefect, and he stamped his foot in his impatience.

"Saveria! Saveria!" shouted Orso, "open the door, in the devil's name!"

"One moment," said Brandolaccio. "We have to slip away first, on our side. Signor Prefetto, the custom, when people meet in the house of a mutual friend, is to allow each other half an hour's law, after departure."

The prefect cast a scornful glance at him.

"Your servant, signorina, and gentlemen all!" said Brandolaccio. Then stretching out his arm, "Hi, Brusco," he cried to his dog, "jump for the Signor Prefetto!"

The dog jumped; the bandits swiftly snatched up their arms in the kitchen, fled across the garden, and at a shrill whistle the door of the room flew open as though by magic.

"Signor Barricini," said Orso, and suppressed fury vibrated in his voice, "I hold you to be a forger! This very day I shall charge you before the public prosecutor with forgery and complicity with Bianchi. I may perhaps have a still more terrible accusation to bring against you!"

"And I, Signor della Rebbia," replied the mayor, "shall lay my charge against you for conspiracy and complicity with bandits. Meanwhile the prefect will desire the gendarmes to keep an eye upon you."

"The prefect will do his duty," said that gentleman sternly. "He will see the public order is not disturbed at Pietranera; he will take care justice is done. I say this to you all, gentlemen!"

The mayor and Vincentello were outside the room already, and Orlanduccio was following them, stepping backward, when Orso said to him in an undertone:

"Your father is an old man. One cuff from me would kill him. It is with you and with your brother that I intend to deal."

Orlanduccio's only response was to draw his dagger and fly like a madman at Orso. But before he could use his weapon Colomba caught hold of his arm and twisted it violently, while Orso gave him a blow in the face with his fist, which made him stagger several paces back, and come into violent collision with the door frame. Orlanduccio's dagger dropped from his hand. But Vincentello had his ready, and was rushing back into the room, when Colomba, snatching up a gun, convinced him that the struggle must be unequal. At the same moment the prefect threw himself between the combatants.

"We shall soon meet, Ors' Anton'!" shouted Orlanduccio, and slamming the door of the room violently, he turned the key in the lock, so as to insure himself time to retreat.

For a full quarter of an hour Orso and the prefect kept their places in dead silence, at opposite ends of the room. Colomba, the pride of triumph shining on her brow, gazed first at one and then at the other, as she leaned on the gun that had turned the scale of victory.

"What a country! Oh, what a country!" cried the prefect at last, rising hastily from his chair. "Signor della Rebbia, you did wrong! You must give me your

word of honour to abstain from all violence, and to wait till the law settles this cursed business."

"Yes, Signor Prefetto, I was wrong to strike that villain. But I did strike him, after all, and I can't refuse him the satisfaction he has demanded of me."

"Pooh! no! He doesn't want to fight you! But supposing he murders you? You've done everything you could to insure it."

"We'll protect ourselves," said Colomba.

"Orlanduccio," said Orso, "strikes me as being a plucky fellow, and I think better of him than that, monsieur. He was very quick about drawing his dagger. But perhaps I should have done the same thing in his place, and I'm glad my sister has not an ordinary fine lady's wrist."

"You are not to fight," exclaimed the prefect. "I forbid it!"

"Allow me to say, monsieur, that in matters that affect my honour the only authority I acknowledge is that of my own conscience."

"You sha'n't fight, I tell you!"

"You can put me under arrest, monsieur—that is, if I let you catch me. But if you were to do that, you would only delay a thing that has now become inevitable. You are a man of honour yourself, monsieur; you know there can be no other course."

"If you were to have my brother arrested," added Colomba, "half the village would take his part, and we should have a fine fusillade."

"I give you fair notice, monsieur, and I entreat

you not to think I am talking mere bravado. I warn you that if Signor Barricini abuses his authority as mayor, to have me arrested, I shall defend myself."

"From this very day," said the prefect, "Signor Barricini is suspended. I trust he will exculpate himself. Listen to me, my young gentleman, I have a liking for you. What I ask of you is nothing to speak of. Just to stay quietly at home till I get back from Corte. I shall only be three days away. I'll bring back the public prosecutor with me, and then we'll sift this wretched business to the bottom. Will you promise me you will abstain from all hostilities till then?"

"I can not promise that, monsieur, if, as I expect, Orlanduccio asks me to meet him."

"What, Signor della Rebbia! would you—a French officer—think of going out with a man you suspect of being a forger?"

"I struck him, monsieur!"

"But supposing you struck a convict, and he demanded satisfaction of you, would you fight him? Come, come, Signor Orso! But I'll ask you to do even less, do nothing to seek out Orlanduccio. I'll consent to your fighting him if he asks you for a meeting."

"He will ask for it, I haven't a doubt of that. But I'll promise I won't give him fresh cuffs to induce him to do it."

"What a country!" cried the prefect once more, as he strode to and fro. "Shall I never get back to France?"

"Signor Prefetto," said Colomba in her most dulcet

tones, "it is growing very late. Would you do us the honour of breakfasting here?"

The prefect could not help laughing.

"I've been here too long already—it may look like partiality. And there is that cursed foundation-stone. I must be off. Signorina della Rebbia! what calamities you may have prepared this day!"

"At all events, Signor Prefetto, you will do my sister the justice of believing her convictions are deeply rooted—and I am sure, now, that you yourself believe them to be well-founded."

"Farewell, sir!" said the prefect, waving his hand. "I warn you that the sergeant of gendarmes will have orders to watch everything you do."

When the prefect had departed—

"Orso," said Colomba, "this isn't the Continent. Orlanduccio knows nothing about your duels, and besides, that wretch must not die the death of a brave man."

"Colomba, my dear, you are a clever woman. I owe you a great deal from having saved me from a hearty knife-thrust. Give me your little hand to kiss! But, hark ye, let me have my way. There are certain matters that you don't understand. Give me my breakfast. And as soon as the prefect has started off send for little Chilina, who seems to perform all the commissions she is given in the most wonderful fashion. I shall want her to take a letter for me."

While Colomba was superintending the preparation

of his breakfast, Orso went up to his own room and wrote the following note:

"You must be in a hurry to meet me, and I am no less eager. We can meet at six o'clock to-morrow morning in the valley of Acquaviva. I am a skilful pistol-shot, so I do not suggest that weapon to you. I hear you are a good shot with a gun. Let us each take a double-barrelled gun. I shall be accompanied by a man from this village. If your brother wishes to go with you, take a second witness, and let me know. In that case only I should bring two with me.

"Orso Antonio della Rebbia."

After spending an hour with the deputy-mayor, and going into the Barricini house for a few minutes, the prefect, attended by a single gendarme, started for Corte. A quarter of an hour later, Chilina carried over the letter my readers have just perused, and delivered it into Orlanduccio's own hands.

The answer was not prompt, and did not arrive till evening. It bore the signature of the elder Barricini, and informed Orso that he was laying the threatening letter sent to his son before the public prosecutor. His missive concluded thus: "Strong in the sense of a clear conscience, I patiently wait till the law has pronounced on your calumnies."

Meanwhile five or six herdsmen, summoned by Colomba, arrived to garrison the della Rebbia Tower. In spite of Orso's protests, *archere* were arranged in the

windows looking onto the square, and all through the evening offers of service kept coming in from various persons belonging to the village. There was even a letter from the bandit-theologian, undertaking, for himself and Brandolaccio, that in the event of the mayor's calling on the gendarmes, they themselves would straightway intervene. The following postscript closed the letter:

"Dare I ask you what the Signor Prefetto thinks of the excellent education bestowed by my friend on Brusco, the dog? Next to Chilina, he is the most docile and promising pupil I have ever come across."

CHAPTER XVI

THE following day went by without any hostile demonstration. Both sides kept on the defensive. Orso did not leave his house, and the door of the Barricini dwelling remained closely shut. The five gendarmes who had been left to garrison Pietranera were to be seen walking about the square and the outskirts of the village, in company with the village constable, the sole representative of the urban police force. The deputy-mayor never put off his sash. But there was no actual symptom of war, except the loopholes in the two opponents' houses. Nobody but a Corsican would have noticed that the group round the evergreen oak in the middle of the square consisted solely of women.

At supper-time Colomba gleefully showed her brother a letter she had just received from Miss Nevil.

"My dear Signorina Colomba," it ran, "I learn with great pleasure, through a letter from your brother, that your enmities are all at an end. I congratulate you heartily. My father can not endure Ajaccio now your brother is not there to talk about war and go out shooting with him. We are starting to-day, and shall sleep at the house of your kinswoman, to whom we have a

letter. The day after to-morrow, somewhere about eleven o'clock, I shall come and ask you to let me taste that mountain *bruccio* of yours, which you say is so vastly superior to what we get in the town.

"Farewell, dear Signorina Colomba.

"Your affectionate

"LYDIA NEVIL."

"Then she hasn't received my second letter!" exclaimed Orso.

"You see by the date of this one that Miss Lydia must have already started when your letter reached Ajaccio. But did you tell her not to come?"

"I told her we were in a state of siege. That does not seem to me a condition that permits of our receiving company."

"Bah! These English people are so odd. The very last night I slept in her room she told me she would be sorry to leave Corsica without having seen a good *vendetta*. If you choose, Orso, you might let her see an assault on our enemies' house."

"Do you know, Colomba," said Orso, "Nature blundered when she made you a woman. You'd have made a first-rate soldier."

"Maybe. Anyhow, I'm going to make my *bruccio*."

"Don't waste your time. We must send somebody down to warn them and stop them before they start."

"Do you mean to say you would send a messenger

out in such weather, to have him and your letter both swept away by a torrent? How I pity those poor bandits in this storm! Luckily they have good *piloni*.* Do you know what you ought to do, Orso? If the storm clears you should start off very early to-morrow morning, and get to our kinswoman's house before they leave it. That will be easy enough, for Miss Lydia always gets up so late. You can tell them everything that has happened here, and if they still persist in coming, why! we shall be very glad to welcome them."

Orso lost no time in assenting to this plan, and after a few moments' silence, Colomba continued:

"Perhaps, Orso, you think I was joking when I talked of an assault on the Barricini's house. Do you know we are in force—two to one at the very least? Now that the prefect has suspended the mayor, every man in the place is on our side. We might cut them to pieces. It would be quite easy to bring it about. If you liked, I could go over to the fountain and begin to jeer at their women folk. They would come out. Perhaps—they are such cowards!—they would fire at me through their loopholes. They wouldn't hit me. Then the thing would be done. They would have begun the attack, and the beaten party must take its chance. How is anybody to know which person's aim has been true, in a scuffle? Listen to your own sister, Orso! These lawyers who are coming will blacken lots of paper, and talk a great deal of useless stuff. Nothing will come of it all. That old fox will contrive

* Thick cloth cloaks with hoods.

to make them think they see stars in broad midday. Ah! if the prefect hadn't thrown himself in front of Vincentello, we should have had one less to deal with."

All this was said with the same calm air as that with which she had spoken, an instant previously, of her preparations for making the *bruccio*.

Orso, quite dumfounded, gazed at his sister with an admiration not unmixed with alarm.

"My sweet Colomba," he said, as he rose from the table, "I really am afraid you are the very devil. But make your mind easy. If I don't succeed in getting the Barricini hanged, I'll contrive to get the better of them in some other fashion. 'Hot bullet or cold steel' *—you see I haven't forgotten my Corsican."

"The sooner the better," said Colomba, with a sigh. "What horse will you ride to-morrow, Ors' Anton'?"

"The black. Why do you ask?"

"So as to make sure he has some barley."

When Orso went up to his room, Colomba sent Saveria and the herdsmen to their beds, and sat on alone in the kitchen, where the *bruccio* was simmering. Now and then she seemed to listen, and was apparently waiting very anxiously for her brother to go to bed. At last, when she thought he was asleep, she took a knife, made sure it was sharp, slipped her little feet into thick shoes, and passed noiselessly out into the garden.

This garden, which was inclosed by walls, lay next to a good-sized piece of hedged ground, into which the

* *Palla calda u farru freddu*, a very common saying.

horses were turned—for Corsican horses do not know what a stable means. They are generally turned loose into a field, and left to themselves, to find pasture and shelter from cold winds, as best they may.

Colomba opened the garden gate with the same precaution, entered the inclosure, and whistling gently, soon attracted the horses, to whom she had often brought bread and salt. As soon as the black horse came within reach, she caught him firmly by the mane, and split his ear open with her knife. The horse gave a violent leap, and tore off with that shrill cry which sharp pain occasionally extorts from his kind. Quite satisfied, Colomba was making her way back into the garden, when Orso threw open his window and shouted, "Who goes there?" At the same time she heard him cock his gun. Luckily for her the garden-door lay in the blackest shadow, and was partly screened by a large fig-tree. She very soon gathered, from the light she saw glancing up and down in her brother's room, that he was trying to light his lamp. She lost no time about closing the garden-door, and slipping along the wall, so that the outline of her black garments was lost against the dark foliage of the fruit-trees, and succeeded in getting back into the kitchen a few moments before Orso entered it.

"What's the matter?" she inquired.

"I fancied I heard somebody opening the garden-door," said Orso.

"Impossible! The dog would have barked. But let us go and see!"

Orso went round the garden, and having made sure that the outer door was safely secured, he was going back to his room, rather ashamed of his false alarm.

"I am glad, brother," remarked Colomba, "that you are learning to be prudent, as a man in your position ought to be."

"You are training me well," said Orso. "Good-night!"

By dawn the next morning Orso was up and ready to start. His style of dress betrayed the desire for smartness felt by every man bound for the presence of the lady he would fain please, combined with the caution of a Corsican *in vendetta.* Over a blue coat, that sat closely to his figure, he wore a small tin case full of cartridges, slung across his shoulder by a green silk cord. His dagger lay in his side pocket, and in his hand he carried his handsome Manton, ready loaded. While he was hastily swallowing the cup of coffee Colomba had poured out for him, one of the herdsmen went out to put the bridle and saddle on the black horse. Orso and his sister followed close on his heels and entered the field. The man had caught the horse, but he had dropped both saddle and bridle, and seemed quite paralyzed with horror, while the horse, remembering the wound it had received during the night, and trembling for its other ear, was rearing, kicking, and neighing like twenty fiends.

"Now then! make haste!" shouted Orso.

"Ho, Ors' Anton'! Ho, Ors' Anton'!" yelled the herdsman. "Holy Madonna!" and he poured out a

string of imprecations, numberless, endless, and most of them quite untranslatable.

"What can be the matter?" inquired Colomba. They all drew near to the horse, and at the sight of the creature's bleeding head and split ear there was a general outcry of surprise and indignation. My readers must know that among the Corsicans to mutilate an enemy's horse is at once a vengeance, a challenge, and a mortal threat. "Nothing but a bullet-wound can expiate such a crime."

Though Orso, having lived so long on the mainland, was not so sensitive as other Corsicans to the enormity of the insult, still, if any supporter of the Barricini had appeared in his sight at that moment, he would probably have taken instant vengeance on him for the outrage he ascribed to his enemies.

"The cowardly wretches!" he cried. "To avenge themselves on a poor brute, when they dare not meet me face to face!"

"What are we waiting for?" exclaimed Colomba vehemently. "They come here and brave us! they mutilate our horses! and we are not to make any response? Are you men?"

"Vengeance!" shouted the herdsmen. "Let us lead the horse through the village, and attack their house!"

"There's a thatched barn that touches their Tower," said old Polo Griffo; "I'd set fire to it in a trice."

Another man wanted to fetch the ladders out of the

church steeple. A third proposed they should break in the doors of the house with a heavy beam intended for some house in course of building, which had been left lying in the square. Amid all the angry voices Colomba was heard telling her satellites that before they went to work she would give each man of them a large glass of anisette.

Unluckily, or rather luckily, the impression she had expected to produce by her own cruel treatment of the poor horse was largely lost on Orso. He felt no doubt that the savage mutilation was due to one of his foes, and he specially suspected Orlanduccio; but he did not believe that the young man, whom he himself had provoked and struck, had wiped out his shame by slitting a horse's ear. On the contrary, this mean and ridiculous piece of vengeance had increased Orso's scorn for his opponents, and he now felt, with the prefect, that such people were not worthy to try conclusions with himself. As soon as he was able to make himself heard, he informed his astonished partisans that they would have to relinquish all their bellicose intentions, and that the power of the law, which would shortly be on the spot, would amply suffice to avenge the hurt done to a horse's ear.

"I'm master here!" he added sternly; "and I insist on being obeyed. The first man who dares to say anything more about killing or burning, will quite possibly get a scorching at my hands! Be off! Saddle me the gray horse!"

"What's this, Orso?" said Colomba, drawing him

apart. "You allow these people to insult us? No Barricini would have dared to mutilate any beast of ours in my father's time."

"I promise you they shall have reason to repent it. But it is gendarme's and jailer's work to punish wretches who only venture to raise their hands against brute beasts. I've told you already, the law will punish them; and if not, you will not need to remind me whose son I am."

"Patience!" answered Colomba, with a sigh.

"Remember this, sister," continued Orso; "if I find, when I come back, that any demonstration whatever has been made against the Barricini I shall never forgive you." Then, in a gentler tone, he added, "Very possibly—very probably—I shall bring the colonel and his daughter back with me. See that their rooms are well prepared, and that the breakfast is good. In fact, let us make our guests as comfortable as we can. It's a very good thing to be brave, Colomba, but a woman must know how to manage her household, as well. Come, kiss me, and be good! Here's the gray, ready saddled."

"Orso," said Colomba, "you mustn't go alone."

"I don't need anybody," replied Orso; "and I'll promise you nobody shall slit my ear."

"Oh, I'll never consent to your going alone, while there is a feud. Here! Polo Griffo! Gian' Franco! Memmo! take your guns; you must go with my brother."

After a somewhat lively argument, Orso had to

give in, and accept an escort. From the most excited of the herdsmen he chose out those who had been loudest in their desire to commence hostilities; then, after laying fresh injunctions on his sister and the men he was leaving behind, he started, making a detour, this time, so as to avoid the Barricinis' dwelling.

They were a long way from Pietranera, and were travelling along at a great pace, when, as they crossed a streamlet that ran into a marsh, Polo Griffo noticed several porkers wallowing comfortably in the mud, in full enjoyment at once of the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the water. Instantly he took aim at the biggest, fired at its head, and shot it dead. The dead creature's comrades rose and fled with astonishing swiftness, and though another herdsman fired at them, they reached a thicket and disappeared into it, safe and sound.

"Idiots!" cried Orso. "You've been taking pigs for wild boars!"

"Not a bit, Ors' Anton'," replied Polo Griffo. "But that herd belongs to the lawyer, and I've taught him, now, to mutilate our horses."

"What! you rascal!" shouted Orso, in a perfect fury. "You ape the vile behaviour of our enemies! Be off, villains! I don't want you! You're only fit to fight with pigs. I swear to God that if you dare follow me I'll blow your brains out!"

The herdsmen stared at each other, struck quite dumb. Orso spurred his horse, galloped off, and was soon out of sight.

"Well, well!" said Polo Griffo. "Here's a pretty thing. You devote yourself to people, and then this is how they treat you. His father, the colonel, was angry with you long ago, because you levelled your gun at the lawyer. Great idiot you were, not to shoot. And now here is his son. You saw what I did for him. And he talks about cracking my skull, just as he would crack a gourd that lets the wine leak out. That's what people learn on the mainland, Memmo!"

"Yes, and if any one finds out it was you who killed that pig there'll be a suit against you, and Ors' Anton' won't speak to the judges, nor buy off the lawyer for you. Luckily nobody saw, and you have Saint Nega to help you out."

After a hasty conclave, the two herdsmen concluded their wisest plan was to throw the dead pig into a bog, and this project they carefully executed, after each had duly carved himself several slices out of the body of this innocent victim of the feud between the Barricini and the della Rebbia.

CHAPTER XVII

Once rid of his unruly escort, Orso proceeded calmly on his way, far more absorbed by the prospective pleasure of seeing Miss Nevil than stirred by any fear of coming across his enemies.

"The lawsuit I must bring against these Barricini villains," he mused, "will necessitate my going down to Bastia. Why should I not go there with Miss Nevil? And once at Bastia, why shouldn't we all go together to the springs of Orezza?"

Suddenly his childish recollections of that picturesque spot rose up before him. He fancied himself on the verdant lawn that spreads beneath the ancient chestnut-trees. On the lustrous green sward, studded with blue flowers like eyes that smiled upon him, he saw Miss Lydia seated at his side. She had taken off her hat, and her fair hair, softer and finer than any silk, shone like gold in the sunlight that glinted through the foliage. Her clear blue eyes looked to him bluer than the sky itself. With her cheek resting on one hand, she was listening thoughtfully to the words of love he poured tremblingly into her ear. She wore the muslin gown in which she had been dressed that last day at Ajaccio. From beneath its folds peeped out a

tiny foot, shod with black satin. Orso told himself that he would be happy indeed if he might dare to kiss that little foot—but one of Miss Lydia's hands was bare and held a daisy. He took the daisy from her, and Lydia's hand pressed his, and then he kissed the daisy, and then he kissed her hand, and yet she did not chide him. . . . and all these thoughts prevented him from paying any attention to the road he was travelling, and meanwhile he trotted steadily onward. For the second time, in his fancy, he was about to kiss Miss Nevil's snow-white hand, when, as his horse stopped short, he very nearly kissed its head, in stern reality. Little Chilina had barred his way, and seized his bridle.

"Where are you going to, Ors' Anton'?" she said. "Don't you know your enemy is close by?"

"My enemy!" cried Orso, furious at being interrupted at such a delightful moment. "Where is he?"

"Orlanduccio is close by, he's waiting for you! Go back, go back!"

"Ho! ho! So he's waiting for me! Did you see him?"

"Yes, Ors' Anton'! I was lying down in the heather when he passed by. He was looking round everywhere through his glass."

"And which way did he go?"

"He went down there. Just where you were going!"

"Thank you!"

"Ors' Anton', hadn't you better wait for my uncle?

He must be here soon—and with him you would be safe."

"Don't be frightened, Chili. I don't need your uncle."

"If you would let me, I would go in front of you."

"No, thanks! no, thanks!"

And Orso, spurring his horse, rode rapidly in the direction to which the little girl had pointed.

His first impulse had been one of blind fury, and he had told himself that fortune was offering him an excellent opportunity of punishing the coward who had avenged the blow he had received by mutilating a horse. But as he moved onward the thought of his promise to the prefect, and, above all, his fear of missing Miss Nevil's visit, altered his feelings, and made him almost wish he might not come upon Orlanduccio. Soon, however, the memory of his father, the indignity offered to his own horse, and the threats of the Barricini, stirred his rage afresh, and incited him to seek his foe, and to provoke and force him to a fight. Thus tossed by conflicting feelings, he continued his progress, though now he carefully scrutinized every thicket and hedge, and sometimes even pulled up his horse to listen to the vague sounds to be heard in any open country. Ten minutes after he had left little Chilina (it was then about nine o'clock in the morning) he found himself on the edge of an exceedingly steep declivity. The road, or rather the very slight path, which he was following, ran through a *mâquis* that had been lately burned. The ground was covered with whitish

ashes, and here and there some shrubs, and a few big trees, blackened by the flames, and entirely stripped of their leaves, still stood erect—though life had long since departed out of them. The sight of a burned *mâquis* is enough to make a man fancy he has been transported into midwinter in some northern clime, and the contrast between the barrenness of the ground over which the flames have passed, with the luxuriant vegetation round about it, heightens this appearance of sadness and desolation. But at that moment the only thing that struck Orso in this particular landscape was one point—an important one, it is true, in his present circumstances. The bareness of the ground rendered any kind of ambush impossible, and the man who has reason to fear that at any moment he may see a gun-barrel thrust out of a thicket straight at his own chest, looks on a stretch of smooth ground, with nothing on it to intercept his view, as a kind of oasis. After this burned *mâquis* came a number of cultivated fields, inclosed, according to the fashion of that country, with breast-high walls, built of dry stones. The path ran between these fields, which were irregularly dotted with huge chestnut-trees, producing, from a distance, the effect of a thick wood.

The steepness of the declivity made it necessary for Orso to dismount. He was walking quickly down the hill, which was slippery with ashes (he had thrown the bridle on his horse's neck), and was hardly five-and-twenty paces from one of these stone fences, when, just in front of him, on the right-hand side of the road, he

perceived first of all the barrel of a gun, and then a head, rising over the top of the wall. The gun was levelled, and he recognised Orlanduccio, just ready to fire. Orso swiftly prepared for self-defence, and the two men, taking deliberate aim, stared at each other for several seconds, with that thrill of emotion which the bravest must feel when he knows he must either deal death or endure it.

"Vile coward!" shouted Orso.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when he saw the flash of Orlanduccio's gun, and almost at the same instant a second shot rang out on his left from the other side of the path, fired by a man whom he had not noticed, and who was aiming at him from behind another wall. Both bullets struck him. The first, Orlanduccio's, passed through his left arm, which Orso had turned toward him as he aimed. The second shot struck him in the chest, and tore his coat, but coming in contact with the blade of his dagger, it luckily flattened against it, and only inflicted a trifling bruise. Orso's left arm fell helpless at his side, and the barrel of his gun dropped for a moment, but he raised it at once, and aiming his weapon with his right hand only, he fired at Orlanduccio. His enemy's head, which was only exposed to the level of the eyes, disappeared behind the wall. Then Orso, swinging round to the left, fired the second barrel at a man in a cloud of smoke whom he could hardly see. This face likewise disappeared. The four shots had followed each other with incredible swiftness; no trained soldiers ever fired their volleys in

quicker succession. After Orso's last shot a great silence fell. The smoke from his weapon rose slowly up into the sky. There was not a movement, not the slightest sound from behind the wall. But for the pain in his arm, he could have fancied the men on whom he had just fired had been phantoms of his own imagination.

Fully expecting a second volley, Orso moved a few steps, to place himself behind one of the burned trees that still stood upright in the *mâquis*. Thus sheltered, he put his gun between his knees, and hurriedly reloaded it. Meanwhile his left arm began to hurt him horribly, and felt as if it were being dragged down by a huge weight.

What had become of his adversaries? He could not understand. If they had taken to flight, if they had been wounded, he would certainly have heard some noise, some stir among the leaves. Were they dead, then? Or, what was far more likely, were they not waiting behind their wall for a chance of shooting at him again? In his uncertainty, and feeling his strength fast failing him, he knelt down on his right knee, rested his wounded arm upon the other, and took advantage of a branch that protruded from the trunk of the burned tree to support his gun. With his finger on the trigger, his eye fixed on the wall, and his ear strained to catch the slightest sound, he knelt there, motionless, for several minutes, which seemed to him a century. At last, behind him, in the far distance, he heard a faint shout, and very soon a dog flew like an arrow down the

slope, and stopped short, close to him, wagging its tail. It was Brusco, the comrade and follower of the bandits —the herald, doubtless, of his master's approach. Never was any honest man more impatiently awaited. With his muzzle in the air, and turned toward the nearest fence, the dog sniffed anxiously. Suddenly he gave vent to a low growl, sprang at a bound over the wall, and almost instantly reappeared upon its crest, whence he gazed steadily at Orso with eyes that spoke surprise as clearly as a dog's may do it. Then he sniffed again, this time toward the other inclosure, the wall of which he also crossed. Within a second he was back on the top of that, with the same air of astonishment and alarm, and straightway he bounded into the thicket with his tail between his legs, still gazing at Orso, and retiring from him slowly, and sideways, until he had put some distance between them. Then off he started again, tearing up the slope almost as fast as he had come down it, to meet a man, who, in spite of its steepness, was rapidly descending.

"Help, Brando!" shouted Orso, as soon as he thought he was within hearing.

"Hallo! Ors' Anton'! are you wounded?" inquired Brandolaccio, as he ran up panting. "Is it in your body or your limbs?"

"In the arm."

"The arm—oh, that's nothing! And the other fellow?"

"I think I hit him."

Brandolaccio ran after his dog to the nearest field

and leaned over to look at the other side of the wall, then pulling off his cap—

"Signor Orlanduccio, I salute you!" said he, then turning toward Orso, he bowed to him, also, gravely.

"That," he remarked, "is what I call a man who has been properly done for."

"Is he still alive?" asked Orso, who could hardly breathe.

"Oh! he wouldn't wish it! he'd be too much vexed about the bullet you put into his eye! Holy Madonna! What a hole! That's a good gun, upon my soul! what a weight! That spatters a man's brains for you! Hark ye, Ors' Anton'! when I heard the first *piff, piff*, says I to myself: 'Dash it, they're murdering my lieutenant!' Then I heard *boum, boum.* 'Ha, ha!' says I, 'that's the English gun beginning to talk—he's firing back.' But what on earth do you want with me, Brusco?"

The dog guided him to the other field.

"Upon my word," cried Brandolaccio, utterly astonished, "a right and left, that's what it is! Deuce take it! Clear enough, powder must be dear, for you don't waste it!"

"What do you mean, for God's sake?" asked Orso.

"Come, sir, don't try to humbug me; you bring down the game, and then you want somebody to pick it up for you. Well! there's one man who'll have a queer dessert to-day, and that's Lawyer Barricini!—

you want butcher's meat, do you? Well, here you have it. Now, who the devil will be the heir?"

"What! is Vincentello dead too?"

"Dead as mutton. *Salute à noi!* * The good point about you is that you don't let them suffer. Just come over and look at Vincentello; he's kneeling here with his head against the wall, as if he were asleep. You may say he sleeps like lead, this time, poor devil."

Orso turned away his head in horror.

"Are you certain he's dead?"

"You're like Sampiero Corso, who never had to fire more than once. Look at it there, in his chest, on the left—just where Vincileone was hit at Waterloo. I'll wager that bullet isn't far from his heart—a right and left! Ah! I'll never talk about shooting again. Two with two shots, and bullets at that! The two brothers! If he'd had a third shot he'd have killed their papa. Better luck next time. What a shot! Ors' Anton'! And to think that an honest poor chap like me will never get the chance of a right and left at two gendarmes!"

As he talked the bandit was scanning Orso's arm, and splitting up his sleeve with his dagger.

"This is nothing," said he. "But this coat of yours will give Signorina Colomba work to do. Ha! what's this I see? this gash upon your chest? Nothing went in there, surely? No! you wouldn't be so brisk as you are! Come, try to move your finger. Do you

* An exclamation generally used after the word "death" and which is supposed to serve as its corrective.

feel my teeth when I bite your little finger? Not very well? Never mind! it won't be much. Let me take your handkerchief and your neckcloth. Well, your coat's spoilt, anyhow! What the devil did you make yourself so smart for? Were you going to a wedding? There! drink a drop of wine. Why on earth don't you carry a flask? Does any Corsican ever go out without a flask?"

Then again he broke off the dressing of the wound to exclaim:

"A right and left! Both of them stone dead! How the Padre will laugh! A right and left! Oh, here's that little dawdle Chilina at last!"

Orso made no reply—he was as pale as death and shaking in every limb.

"Chili!" shouted Brandolaccio, "go and look behind that wall!"

The child, using both hands and feet, scrambled onto the wall, and the moment she caught sight of Orlanduccio's corpse she crossed herself.

"That's nothing," proceeded the bandit; "go and look farther on, over there!"

The child crossed herself again.

"Was it you, uncle?" she asked timidly.

"Me! Don't you know I've turned into a useless old fellow! This, Chili, is the signor's work; offer him your compliments."

"The signora will be greatly rejoiced," said Chilina, "and she will be very much grieved to know you are wounded, Ors' Anton'."

"Now then, Ors' Anton'," said the bandit, when he had finished binding up the wound. "Chilina, here, has caught your horse. You must get on his back, and come with me to the Stazzona *mâquis*. It would be a sly fellow who'd lay his hand on you there. When we get to the Cross of Santa Christina, you'll have to dismount. You'll give over your horse to Chilina, who'll go off and warn the signorina. You can give her your messages now, as you ride along. You can say anything to the child, Ors' Anton'. She would let herself be cut in pieces rather than betray her friends," and then, fondly, he turned to the little girl, "That's it, you little hussy; a ban on you, a curse on you—you jade!" For Brandolaccio, who was superstitious, like most bandits, feared he might cast a spell on a child if he blessed it or praised it, seeing it is a well-known fact that the mysterious powers that rule the *Annocchiatura* * have a vile habit of fulfilling our wishes in the very opposite sense to that we give them.

"Where am I to go, Brando?" queried Orso in a faint voice.

"Faith! you must choose; either to jail or to the *mâquis*. But no della Rebbia knows the path that leads him to the jail. To the *mâquis*, Ors' Anton'."

"Farewell, then, to all my hopes!" exclaimed the wounded man, sadly.

"Your hopes? Deuce take it! Did you hope to do any better with a double-barrelled gun? How on

* *Annocchiatura*, an involuntary spell cast either by the eye or by spoken words.

earth did the fellows contrive to hit you? The rascals must have been as hard to kill as cats."

"They fired first," said Orso.

"True, true; I'd forgotten that!—*piff, piff—boum, boum*! A right and left, and only one hand! * If any man can do better, I'll go hang myself. Come! now you're safely mounted! Before we start, just give a glance at your work. It isn't civil to leave one's company without saying good-bye."

Orso spurred his horse. He would not have looked at the two poor wretches he had just destroyed, for anything on earth.

"Hark ye, Ors' Anton'," quoth the bandit, as he caught hold of the horse's bridle, "shall I tell you the truth? Well, no offence to you! I'm sorry for those poor young fellows! You'll pardon me, I hope; so good-looking, so strong, so young. Orlanduccio, I've shot with him so often! Only four days ago he gave me a bundle of cigars, and Vincentello—he was always so cheery. Of course you've only done what you had to do, and indeed the shot was such a splendid one, nobody could regret it. But I, you see, had nothing to do with your vengeance. I know you're perfectly in the right. When one has an enemy one must get rid of him. But the Barricini were an old family. Here's

* If any unbelieving sportsman is inclined to doubt the possibility of Signor della Rebbia's right and left shot, I would suggest his betaking himself to Sartena, and there hearing how one of the foremost and most agreeable residents in that town saved himself unaided and with one arm broken, in at least equally dangerous circumstances.

another of them wiped out, and by a right and left too! It's striking."

As he thus spoke his funeral oration over the Barricini, Brandolaccio hastily guided Orso, Chilina, and Brusco, the dog, toward the Stazzona *mâquis*.

CHAPTER XVIII

Meanwhile, very shortly after Orso's departure, Colomba's spies had warned her that the Barricini were out on the warpath, and from that moment she was racked by the most intense anxiety. She was to be seen moving hither and thither all over the house, between the kitchen and the rooms that were being made ready for her guests, doing nothing, yet always busy, and constantly stopping to look out of a window for any unusual stir in the village. Toward eleven o'clock, a somewhat numerous cavalcade rode into Pietranera. This was the colonel, with his daughter, their servants, and their guide. Colomba's first word, as she welcomed them, was "Have you seen my brother?" Then she questioned the guide as to the road they had taken, and the hour of their departure, and having heard his answers, she could not understand why they had not met him.

"Perhaps," said the guide, "your brother took the higher path; we came by the lower one."

But Colomba only shook her head and asked more questions. In spite of her natural firmness of character, increased as it was by her proud desire to conceal any

sign of weakness before strangers, she could not hide her anxiety, and as soon as she had informed them of the attempted reconciliation, and of its unfortunate issue, this was shared by the colonel and Miss Lydia. Miss Nevil became very uneasy, and wanted to have messengers sent off in every direction, and her father offered to remount at once and set out with the guide in search of Orso. Her guests' alarm recalled Colomba to a sense of her duties as a hostess. She strove to force a smile as she pressed the colonel to come to table, and suggested twenty plausible reasons, which she herself demolished within an instant, to account for her brother's delay. The colonel, feeling it to be his duty, as a man, to reassure the ladies, put forward his own explanation.

"I'll wager," he said, "that della Rebbia has come across some game or other. He has not been able to stand out against that temptation, and we shall soon see him come in with a heavy bag. 'Pon my soul," he went on, "we did hear four shots fired on the road. Two of them were louder than the others, and I said to my girl, 'I'll bet anything that's della Rebbia out shooting! My gun is the only one that would make that noise.'"

Colomba turned pale, and Lydia, who was watching her closely, had no difficulty in guessing the suspicions with which the colonel's conjecture had inspired her. After a few minutes' silence, Colomba eagerly inquired whether the two louder reports had been heard before or after the others. But neither the colonel, his daugh-

ter, nor the guide had paid much attention to this all-important detail.

Toward one o'clock, as none of Colomba's messengers had yet returned, she gathered all her courage, and insisted that her guests should sit down to table with her. But, except the colonel, none of them could eat. At the slightest sound in the square, Colomba ran to the window. Then drearily she returned to her place, and struggled yet more drearily to carry on a trivial conversation, to which nobody paid the slightest attention, and which was broken by long intervals of silence. All at once they heard a horse's gallop.

"Ah! That must be my brother at last!" said Colomba, rising from her chair. But when she saw Chilina astride on Orso's horse—"My brother is dead!" she cried, in a heart-rending voice.

The colonel dropped his glass. Miss Lydia screamed. They all rushed to the door of the house. Before Chilina could jump off her steed, she was snatched up like a feather by Colomba, who held her so tight that she almost choked her. The child understood her agonized look, and her first words were those of the chorus in Othello: "He lives!" Colomba's grasp relaxed, and nimbly as a kitten Chilina dropped upon the ground.

"The others?" queried Colomba hoarsely. Chilina crossed herself with her first and middle finger. A deep flush instantly replaced the deadly pallor of Colomba's face. She cast one fierce look at the Barricini

dwelling, and then, with a smile, she turned to her guests.

"Let us go in and drink our coffee," she said.

The story the bandit's Iris had to tell was a long one. Her narrative, translated literally into Italian by Colomba, and then into English by Miss Nevil, wrung more than one oath from the colonel, more than one sigh from the fair Lydia. But Colomba heard it all unmoved. Only she twisted her damask napkin till it seemed as if she must tear it in pieces. She interrupted the child, five or six times over, to make her repeat again that Brandolaccio had said the wound was not dangerous, and that he had seen many worse. When she had finished her tale, Chilina announced that Orso earnestly begged he might be sent writing materials, and that he desired his sister would beseech a lady who might be staying in his house not to depart from it, until she had received a letter from him.

"That is what was worrying him most," the child added; "and even after I had started he called me back, to bid me not forget the message. It was the third time he had given it to me." When Colomba heard of her brother's injunction she smiled faintly, and squeezed the fair Englishwoman's hand. That young lady burst into tears, and did not seem to think it advisable to translate that particular part of the story to her father.

"Yes, my dear," cried Colomba, kissing Miss Nevil. "You shall stay with me, and you shall help us."

Then, taking a pile of old linen out of a cupboard,

she began to cut it up, to make lint and bandages. Any one who saw her flashing eyes, her heightened colour, her alternate fits of anxiety and composure, would have found it hard to say whether distress at her brother's wound, or delight at the extinction of her foes, were most affecting her. One moment she was pouring out the colonel's coffee, and telling him how well she made it, the next she was setting Miss Lydia and Chilina to work, exhorting them to sew bandages, and roll them up. Then, for the twentieth time, she would ask whether Orso's wound was very painful. She constantly broke off her own work to exclaim to the colonel:

"Two such cunning men, such dangerous fellows! and he alone, wounded, with only one arm! He killed the two of them! What courage, colonel! Isn't he a hero? Ah, Miss Nevil! how good it must be to live in a peaceful country like yours! I'm sure you did not really know my brother till now! I said it—'The falcon will spread his wings!' You were deceived by his gentle look! That's because with you, Miss Nevil——Ah! if he could see you working for him now! My poor Orso!"

Miss Lydia was doing hardly any work, and could not find a single word to say. Her father kept asking why nobody went to lay a complaint before a magistrate. He talked about a coroner's inquest, and all sorts of other proceedings quite unknown to Corsican economy. And then he begged to be told whether the country house owned by that worthy Signor Brando-

laccio, who had brought succour to the wounded man, was very far away from Pietranera, and whether he could not go there himself, to see his friend.

And Colomba replied, with her usual composure, that Orso was in the *mâquis*; that he was being taken care of by a bandit; that it would be a great risk for him to show himself until he was sure of the line the prefect and the judges were likely to take; and, finally, that she would manage to have him secretly attended by a skilful surgeon.

"Above all things, colonel," she added, "remember that you heard the four shots, and that you told me Orso fired last."

The colonel could make neither head nor tail of the business, and his daughter did nothing but heave sighs and dry her eyes.

The day was far advanced, when a gloomy procession wended its way into the village. The bodies of his two sons were brought home to Lawyer Barricini, each corpse thrown across a mule, which was led by a peasant. A crowd of dependents and idlers followed the dreary *cortège*. With it appeared the gendarmes, who always came in too late, and the deputy-mayor, throwing up his hands, and incessantly repeating, "What will the Signor Prefetto say!" Some of the women, among them Orlanduccio's foster-mother, were tearing their hair and shrieking wildly. But their clamorous grief was less impressive than the dumb despair of one man, on whom all eyes were fixed. This was the wretched father, who passed from one corpse

to the other, lifting up the earth-soiled heads, kissing the blackened lips, supporting the limbs that were stiff already, as if he would save them from the jolting of the road. Now and then he opened his mouth as though about to speak, but not a cry came, not a word. His eyes never left the dead bodies, and as he walked, he knocked himself against the stones, against the trees, against every obstacle that chanced to lie in his path.

The women's lamentations grew louder, and the men's curses deeper, when Orso's house appeared in sight. When some shepherds of the della Rebbia party ventured on a triumphant shout, their enemy's indignation became ungovernable. "Vengeance! Vengeance!" exclaimed several voices. Stones were thrown, and two shots, fired at the windows of the room in which Colomba and her guests were sitting, pierced the outside shutters, and carried splinters of wood on to the table at which the two ladies were working. Miss Lydia screamed violently, the colonel snatched up a gun, and Colomba, before he could stop her, rushed to the door of the house and threw it violently open. There, standing high on the threshold, with her two hands outstretched to curse her enemies:

"Cowards!" she cried. "You fire on women and on foreigners! Are you Corsicans? Are you men? Wretches, who can only murder a man from behind. Come on! I defy you! I am alone! My brother is far away! Come! kill me, kill my guests! It would be worthy of you! . . . But you dare not, cowards that

you are! You know we avenge our wrongs! Away with you! Go, weep like women, and be thankful we do not ask you for more blood!"

There was something terrible and imposing in Colomba's voice and mien. At the sight of her the crowd recoiled as though it beheld one of those evil fairies of which so many tales are told on long winter evenings, in Corsica. The deputy-mayor, the gendarmes, and a few women seized the opportunity, and threw themselves between the two factions; for the della Rebbia herdsmen were already loading their guns, and for a moment a general fight in the middle of the square had appeared imminent. But the two parties were both leaderless, and Corsicans, whose rage is always subject to discipline, seldom come to blows unless the chief authors of their internecine quarrels are present. Besides, Colomba, who had learned prudence from victory, restrained her little garrison.

"Let the poor folks weep in peace," she said. "Let the old man carry his own flesh home. What is the good of killing an old fox who has no teeth left to bite with, . . . Giudice Barricini! Remember the 2d of August! Remember the blood-stained pocket-book in which you wrote with your forger's hand! My father had written down your debt! Your sons have paid it. You may go free, old Barricini!"

With folded arms and a scornful smile upon her lips, Colomba watched the bearers carry the corpses of her enemies into their home, and the crowd without it melt gradually away. Then she closed her own

door, and, going back into the dining-room, she said to the colonel:

"I beg, sir, you will forgive my fellow-countrymen! I never could have believed that any Corsican would have fired on a house that sheltered strangers, and I am ashamed of my country."

That night, when Miss Lydia had gone up to her room, the colonel followed her, and inquired whether they had not better get out of a village where they ran incessant risk of having a bullet through their heads, the very next morning, and leave this country, seething with treachery and murder, as soon as possible.

Miss Nevil did not answer for some time, and her father's suggestion evidently caused her considerable perplexity. At last she said:

"How can we leave this poor young creature, just when she is so much in need of consolation? Don't you think that would be cruel, father?"

"I only spoke on your account, child," said the colonel. "And I assure you that if I once felt you were safe in the hotel at Ajaccio, I should be very sorry to leave this cursed island myself, without shaking that plucky fellow della Rebbia's hand again."

"Well then, father, let us wait a while, and before we start let us make quite sure we can not be of any use to them."

"Kind soul!" said the colonel, as he kissed his daughter's forehead. "It is a pleasure to see you sacrifice yourself for the sake of softening other people's

suffering. Let us stay on. We shall never have to repent having done right."

Miss Lydia tossed sleeplessly to and fro in her bed. Sometimes she took the vague night sounds for preparations for an attack on the house. Sometimes, less alarmed on her own account, she thought of poor, wounded Orso, who was probably lying on the cold earth, with no help beyond what he might expect from a bandit's charity. She fancied him covered with blood, and writhing in hideous suffering; and the extraordinary thing was that whenever Orso's image rose up before her mind's eye, she always beheld him as she had seen him when he rode away, pressing the talisman she had bestowed upon him to his lips. Then she mused over his courage. She told herself he had exposed himself to the frightful danger he had just escaped on her account, just for the sake of seeing her a little sooner. A very little more, and she would have persuaded herself that Orso had earned his broken arm in her defence! She reproached herself with being the cause of his wound. But she admired him for it all the more, and if that celebrated right and left was not so splendid a feat in her sight as in Brandolaccio's or Colomba's, still she was convinced few heroes of romance could ever have behaved with such intrepidity and coolness, in so dangerous a pinch.

Her room was that usually occupied by Colomba. Above a kind of oaken *prie-dieu*, and beside a sprig of blessed palm, a little miniature of Orso, in his sub-lieutenant's uniform, hung on the wall. Miss Nevil took

the portrait down, looked at it for a long time, and laid it at last on the table by her bed, instead of hanging it up again in its place. She did not fall asleep till daybreak, and when she woke the sun had travelled high above the horizon. In front of her bed she beheld Colomba, waiting, motionless, till she should open her eyes.

"Well, dear lady, are you not very uncomfortable in this poor house of ours?" said Colomba to her. "I fear you have hardly slept at all."

"Have you any news, dear friend?" cried Miss Nevil, sitting up in bed.

Her eye fell on Orso's picture, and she hastily tossed her handkerchief upon it.

"Yes, I have news," said Colomba, with a smile.

Then she took up the picture.

"Do you think it like him? He is better looking than that!"

"Really," stammered Miss Nevil, quite confused, "I took down that picture in a fit of absence! I have a horrid habit of touching everything and never putting anything back! How is your brother?"

"Fairly well. Giocanto came here before four o'clock this morning. He brought me a letter for you, Miss Lydia. Orso hasn't written anything to me! It is addressed to Colomba, indeed, but underneath that he has written 'For Miss N.' But sisters are never jealous! Giocanto says it hurt him dreadfully to write. Giocanto, who writes a splendid hand, offered to do it at his dictation. But he would not let him. He wrote

it with a pencil, lying on his back. Brandolaccio held the paper for him. My brother kept trying to raise himself, and then the very slightest movement gave him the most dreadful agony in his arm. Giocanto says it was pitiful. Here is his letter."

Miss Nevil read the letter, which, as an extra precaution, no doubt, was written in English. Its contents were as follows:

"MADEMOISELLE: An unhappy fate has driven me on. I know not what my enemies will say, what slanders they will invent. I care little, so long as you, mademoiselle, give them no credence! Ever since I first saw you I have been nursing wild dreams. I needed this catastrophe to show me my own folly.

"I have come back to my senses now. I know the future that lies before me, and I shall face it with resignation. I dare not keep this ring you gave me, and which I believed to be a lucky talisman. I fear, Miss Nevil, you may regret your gift has been so ill-bestowed. Or rather, I fear it may remind me of the days of my own madness. Colomba will give it to you. Farewell, mademoiselle! You are about to leave Corsica, and I shall never see you again. But tell my sister, at least, that I still possess your esteem—and I tell you, confidently, that I am still worthy of it.

"O. D. R."

Miss Lydia had turned away while she read the letter, and Colomba, who was watching her closely, gave

her the Egyptian ring, with an inquiring glance as to what it all meant. But Miss Lydia dared not raise her head, and looked dejectedly at the ring, alternately putting it on her finger and pulling it off again.

"Dear Miss Nevil," said Colomba, "may I not know what my brother says to you? Does he say anything about his health?"

"Indeed," said Miss Lydia, colouring, "he doesn't mention it. His letter is in English. He desires me to tell my father— He hopes the prefect will be able to arrange——"

With a mischievous smile, Colomba sat down on the bed, took hold of both Miss Nevil's hands, and, looking at her with her piercing eyes—

"Will you be kind?" she said. "Won't you answer my brother's letter? You would do him so much good! For a moment I thought of waking you when his letter come, and then I didn't dare!"

"You did very wrong," replied Miss Nevil. "If a word from me could——"

"I can't send him any letter now. The prefect has arrived, and Pietranera is full of his policemen. Later on, we'll see what we can do. Oh, Miss Nevil, if you only knew my brother, you would love him as dearly as I do. He's so good! He's so brave! Just think of what he has done! One man against two, and wounded as well!"

The prefect had returned. Warned by an express messenger sent by the deputy-mayor, he had brought over the public prosecutor, the registrar, and all their

myrmidons, to investigate the fresh and terrible catastrophe which had just complicated, or it may be ended, the warfare between the chief families of Pietranera. Shortly after his arrival, he saw the colonel and his daughter, and did not conceal his fear that the business might take on an ugly aspect.

"You know," he said, "that the fight took place without witnesses, and the reputation of these two unhappy young men stood so high, both for bravery and cunning, that nobody will believe Signor della Rebbia can have killed them without the help of the bandits with whom he is now supposed to have taken refuge."

"It's not possible," said the colonel. "Orso della Rebbia is a most honourable fellow. I'll stake my life on that."

"I believe you," said the prefect. "But the public prosecutor (those gentry always are suspicious) does not strike me as being particularly well disposed toward him. He holds one bit of evidence which goes rather against our friend—a threatening letter to Orlanduccio, in which he suggests a meeting, and is inclined to think that meeting was a trap."

"That fellow Orlanduccio refused to fight it out like a gentleman."

"That is not the custom here. In this country, people lie in ambush, and kill each other from behind. There is one deposition in his favour—that of a child, who declares she heard four reports, two of which were louder than the others, and produced by a heavy weapon, such as Signor della Rebbia's gun. Unluckily, the

child is the niece of one of the bandits suspected of being his accomplices, and has probably been taught her lesson."

"Sir," broke in Miss Lydia, reddening to the roots of her hair, "we were on the road when those shots were fired, and we heard the same thing."

"Really? That's most important! And you, colonel, no doubt you remarked the very same thing?"

"Yes," responded Miss Lydia quickly. "It was my father, who is so accustomed to firearms, who said to me, 'There's Signor della Rebbia shooting with my gun!'"

"And you are sure those shots you recognised were the last?"

"The two last, weren't they, papa?"

Memory was not the colonel's strong point, but as a standing rule, he knew better than to contradict his daughter.

"I must mention this to the public prosecutor at once, colonel. And besides, we expect a surgeon this evening, who will make an examination of the two bodies, and find out whether the wounds were caused by that particular weapon."

"I gave it to Orso," said the colonel, "and I wish I knew it was at the bottom of the sea. At least—— Plucky boy! I'm heartily glad he had it with him, for I don't quite know how he would have got off if it hadn't been for my Manton."

CHAPTER XIX

It was rather late when the surgeon put in an appearance. On his road up he had met with an adventure of his own. He had been stopped by Giocanto Castriconi, who, with the most scrupulous politeness, called on him to come and attend a wounded man. He had been conducted to Orso's retreat, and had applied the first dressings to his wound. The bandit had then accompanied the doctor some distance on his way, and had greatly edified him by his talk concerning the most celebrated professors at Pisa, whom he described as his intimate friends.

"Doctor," said the theologian, as they parted, "you have inspired me with such a feeling of respect that I think it hardly necessary to remind you that a physician should be as discreet as a confessor." And as he said the words he clicked the trigger of his gun. "You have quite forgotten the spot at which we have had the honour of meeting. Fare you well! I'm delighted to have made your acquaintance."

Colomba besought the colonel to be present at the post-mortem examination.

"You know my brother's gun better than anybody," she said, "and your presence will be most valu-

able. Besides, there are so many wicked people here that we should run a great risk if there were nobody present to protect our interests."

When she was left alone with Miss Lydia, she complained that her head ached terribly, and proposed that they should take a walk just outside the village.

"The fresh air will do me good," she said. "It is so long since I've been out of doors."

As they walked along she talked about her brother, and Miss Lydia, who found the subject tolerably interesting, did not notice that they had travelled a long way from Pietranera. The sun was setting when she became aware of this fact, and she begged Colomba to return. Colomba said she knew a cross-cut which would greatly shorten the walk back, and turning out of the path, she took another, which seemed much less frequented. Soon she began to climb a hill, so steep that to keep her balance she was continually obliged to catch hold of branches with one hand, while she pulled her companion up after her with the other. After about twenty minutes of this trying ascent, they found themselves on a small plateau, clothed with arbutus and myrtle, growing round great granite boulders that jutted above the soil in every direction. Miss Lydia was very tired, there was no sign of the village, and it was almost quite dark.

"Do you know, Colomba, my dear," she said, "I'm afraid we've lost our way!"

"No fear!" answered Colomba. "Let us get on. You follow me."

"But I assure you we're going wrong. The village can't be over there. I'm certain we're turning our backs on it. Why, look at those lights, far away. Pietranera must be in that direction."

"My dear soul," said Colomba, and she looked very much agitated, "you're perfectly right. But in the *mâquis*—less than a hundred yards from here—"

"Well?"

"My brother is lying. If you choose, I might see him, and give him one kiss."

Miss Nevil made a gesture of astonishment.

"I got out of Pietranera without being noticed," continued Colomba, "because I was with you, otherwise I should have been followed. To be so close to him, and not to see him! Why shouldn't you come with me to see my poor brother? You would make him so happy!"

"But, Colomba— That wouldn't be at all proper on my part——"

"I see. With you women who live in towns, your great anxiety is to be proper. We village women only think of what is kind."

"But it's so late! And then what will your brother think of me?"

"He'll think his friends have not forsaken him, and that will give him courage to bear his sufferings."

"And my father? He'll be so anxious!"

"He knows you are with me. Come! Make up your mind. You were looking at his picture this morning," she added, with a sly smile.

"No! Really and truly, I don't dare, Colomba! Think of the bandits who are there."

"Well, what matter? The bandits don't know you. And you were longing to see some."

"Oh, dear!"

"Come, signorina, settle something. I can't leave you alone here. I don't know what might happen to you. Let us go on to see Orso, or else let us go back to the village together. I shall see my brother again. God knows when—never, perhaps!"

"What's that you are saying, Colomba? Well, well, let us go! But only for a minute, and then we'll get home at once."

Colomba squeezed her hand, and without making any reply walked on so quickly that Miss Lydia could hardly keep up with her. She soon halted, luckily, and said to her companion:

"We won't go any farther without warning them. We might have a bullet flying at our heads."

She began to whistle through her fingers. Soon they heard a dog bark, and the bandits' advanced sentry shortly came in sight. This was our old acquaintance Brusco, who recognised Colomba at once and undertook to be her guide. After many windings through the narrow paths in the *mâquis* they were met by two men, armed to the teeth.

"Is that you, Brandolaccio?" inquired Colomba. "Where is my brother?"

"Just over there," replied the bandit. "But go quietly. He's asleep, and for the first time since his

accident. Zounds, it's clear that where the devil gets through, a woman will get through too!"

The two girls moved forward cautiously, and beside a fire, the blaze of which was carefully concealed by a little wall of stones built round it, they beheld Orso, lying on a pile of heather, and covered with a *pilone*. He was very pale, and they could hear his laboured breathing. Colomba sat down near him, and gazed at him silently, with her hands clasped, as though she were praying in her heart. Miss Lydia hid her face in her handkerchief, and nestled close against her friend, but every now and then she lifted her head to take a look at the wounded man over Colomba's shoulder. Thus a quarter of an hour passed by without a word being said by anybody. At a sign from the theologian, Brandolaccio had plunged with him into the *mâquis*, to the great relief of Miss Lydia, who for the first time fancied the local colour of the bandits' wild beards and warlike equipment was a trifle too strong.

At last Orso stirred. Instantly Colomba bent over him, and kissed him again and again, pouring out questions anent his wound, his suffering, and his needs. After having answered that he was doing as well as possible, Orso inquired, in his turn, whether Miss Nevil was still at Pietranera, and whether she had written to him. Colomba, bending over her brother, completely hid her companion from his sight, and indeed the darkness would have made any recognition difficult. She was holding one of Miss Nevil's hands. With the other she slightly raised her wounded brother's head.

"No, brother," she replied. "She did not give me any letter for you. But are you still thinking about Miss Nevil? You must love her very much!"

"Love her, Colomba!—But—but now she may despise me!"

At this point Miss Nevil made a struggle to withdraw her fingers. But it was no easy matter to get Colomba to slacken her grasp. Small and well-shaped though her hand was, it possessed a strength of which we have already noticed certain proofs.

"Despise you!" cried Colomba. "After what you've done? No, indeed! She praises you! Oh, Orso, I could tell you so many things about her!"

Lydia's hand was still struggling for its freedom, but Colomba kept drawing it closer to Orso.

"But after all," said the wounded man, "why didn't she answer me? If she had sent me a single line, I should have been happy."

By dint of pulling at Miss Nevil's hand, Colomba contrived at last to put it into her brother's. Then, moving suddenly aside, she burst out laughing.

"Orso," she cried, "mind you don't speak evil of Miss Lydia—she understands Corsican quite well."

Miss Lydia took back her hand at once and stammered some unintelligible words. Orso thought he must be dreaming.

"You here, Miss Nevil? Good heavens! how did you dare? Oh, how happy you have made me!"

And raising himself painfully, he strove to get closer to her.

"I came with your sister," said Miss Lydia, "so that nobody might suspect where she was going. And then I—I wanted to make sure for myself. Alas! how uncomfortable you are here!"

Colomba had seated herself behind Orso. She raised him carefully so that his head might rest on her lap. She put her arms round his neck and signed to Miss Lydia to come near him.

"Closer! closer!" she said. "A sick man mustn't talk too loud." And when Miss Lydia hesitated, she caught her hand and forced her to sit down so close to Orso that her dress touched him, and her hand, still in Colomba's grasp, lay on the wounded man's shoulder.

"Now he's very comfortable!" said Colomba cheerily. "Isn't it good to lie out in the *mâquis* on such a lovely night? Eh, Orso?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! What a heavenly night! I shall never forget it!" said Orso.

"How you must be suffering!" exclaimed Miss Lydia.

"My suffering is all gone now," said Orso, "and I should like to die here!" And his right hand crept up toward Miss Lydia's, which Colomba still held captive.

"You really must be taken to some place where you can be properly cared for, Signor della Rebbia," said Miss Nevil. "I shall never be able to sleep in my bed, now that I have seen you lying here, so uncomfortable, in the open air."

"If I had not been afraid of meeting you, Miss Nevil, I should have tried to get back to Pietranera, and I should have given myself up to the authorities."

"And why were you afraid of meeting her, Orso?" inquired Colomba.

"I had disobeyed you, Miss Nevil, and I should not have dared to look at you just then."

"Do you know you make my brother do everything you choose, Miss Lydia?" said Colomba, laughing. "I won't let you see him any more."

"I hope this unlucky business will soon be cleared up, and that you will have nothing more to fear," said Miss Nevil. "I shall be so happy, when we go away, to know justice has been done you, and that both your loyalty and your bravery have been acknowledged."

"Going away, Miss Nevil! Don't say that word yet!"

"What are we to do? My father can not spend his whole life shooting. He wants to go."

Orso's hand, which had been touching Miss Lydia's, dropped away, and there was silence for a moment.

"Nonsense!" said Colomba. "We won't let you go yet. We have plenty of things to show you still at Pietranera. Besides, you have promised to paint my picture, and you haven't even begun it so far. And then I've promised to compose you a *serenata*, with seventy-five verses. And then—but what can Brusco be growling about? And here's Brandolaccio running after him. I must go and see what's amiss."

She rose at once, and laying Orso's head, without further ceremony, on Miss Lydia's lap, she ran after the bandits.

Miss Nevil, somewhat startled at finding herself thus left in sole charge of a handsome young Corsican gentleman in the middle of a *mâquis*, was rather puzzled what to do next.

For she was afraid that any sudden movement on her part might hurt the wounded man. But Orso himself resigned the exquisite pillow on which his sister had just laid his head, and raising himself on his right arm, he said:

"So you will soon be gone, Miss Lydia? I never expected your stay in this unhappy country would have been a long one. And yet since you have come to me here, the thought that I must bid you farewell has grown a hundred times more bitter to me. I am only a poor lieutenant. I had no future—and now I am an outlaw. What a moment in which to tell you that I love you, Miss Lydia! But no doubt this is my only chance of saying it. And I think I feel less wretched now I have unburdened my heart to you."

Miss Lydia turned away her head, as if the darkness were not dark enough to hide her blushes.

"Signor della Rebbia," she said, and her voice shook, "should I have come here at all if——" and as she spoke she laid the Egyptian talisman in Orso's hand. Then, with a mighty effort to recover her usual bantering tone—"It's very wrong of you, Signor Orso, to say such things! You know very well that here, in

the middle of the *mâquis*, and with your bandits all about me, I should never dare to be angry with you."

Orso made an attempt to kiss the hand that held out the talisman. Miss Lydia drew it quickly back; he lost his balance, and fell on his wounded arm. He could not stifle a moan of pain.

"Oh, dear, you've hurt yourself, and it was my fault!" she cried, as she raised him up. "Forgive me!" They talked for some time longer, very low, and very close together.

Colomba, running hastily up, found them in the very same position in which she had left them.

"The soldiers!" she cried. "Orso! try to get up and walk! I'll help you!"

"Leave me!" said Orso. "Tell the bandits to escape. What do I care if I am taken? But take away Miss Lydia. For God's sake, don't let anybody see her here!"

"I won't leave you," said Brandolaccio, who had come up on Colomba's heels.

"The sergeant in charge is the lawyer's godson. He'll shoot you instead of arresting you, and then he'll say he didn't do it on purpose."

Orso tried to rise; he even took a few steps. But he soon halted. "I can't walk," he said. "Fly, all of you! Good-bye, Miss Nevil! Give me your hand! Farewell!"

"We won't leave you!" cried the two girls.

"If you can't walk," said Brandolaccio, "I must carry you. Come, sir, a little courage! We shall have

time to slip away by the ravine. The Signor Padre will keep them busy."

"No, leave me!" said Orso, lying down on the ground. "Colomba, take Miss Nevil away!—for God's sake!"

"You're strong, Signorina Colomba," said Brandolaccio. "Catch hold of his shoulders; I'll take his feet. That's it! Now, then, march!"

In spite of his protests, they began to carry him rapidly along. Miss Lydia was following them, in a terrible fright, when a gun was fired, and five or six other reports instantly responded. Miss Lydia screamed and Brandolaccio swore an oath, but he doubled his pace, and Colomba, imitating him, tore through the thicket without paying the slightest heed to the branches that slashed her face and tore her dress.

"Bend down, bend down, dear!" she called out to her companion. "You may be hit by some stray bullet!"

They had walked, or rather run, some five hundred paces in this fashion when Brandolaccio vowed he could go no farther, and dropped on the ground, regardless of all Colomba's exhortations and reproaches.

"Where is Miss Nevil?" was Orso's one inquiry.

Terrified by the firing, checked at every step by the thick growth of the *mâquis*, Miss Nevil had soon lost sight of the fugitives, and been left all alone in a state of the most cruel alarm.

"She has been left behind," said Brandolaccio,

" but she'll not be lost—women always turn up again. Do listen to the row the Padre is making with your gun, Ors' Anton'! Unluckily, it's as black as pitch, and nobody takes much harm from being shot at in the dark."

" Hush! " cried Colomba. " I hear a horse. We're saved! "

Startled by the firing, a horse which had been wandering through the *mâquis*, was really coming close up to them.

" Saved, indeed! " repeated Brandolaccio. It did not take the bandit more than an instant to rush up to the creature, catch hold of his mane, and with Colomba's assistance, bridle him with a bit of knotted rope.

" Now we must warn the Padre," he said. He whistled twice; another distant whistle answered the signal, and the loud voice of the Manton gun was hushed. Then Brandolaccio sprang on the horse's back. Colomba lifted her brother up in front of the bandit, who held him close with one hand and managed his bridle with the other.

In spite of the double load, the animal, urged by a brace of hearty kicks, started off nimbly, and galloped headlong down a steep declivity on which anything but a Corsican steed would have broken its neck a dozen times.

Then Colomba retraced her steps, calling Miss Nevil at the top of her voice; but no answering cry was heard.

After walking hither and thither for some time, trying to recover the path, she stumbled on two riflemen, who shouted, "Who goes there?"

"Well, gentlemen," cried Colomba jeeringly, "here's a pretty racket! How many of you are killed?"

"You were with the bandits!" said one of the soldiers. "You must come with us."

"With pleasure!" she replied. "But there's a friend of mine somewhere close by, and we must find her first."

"Your friend is caught already, and both of you will sleep in jail to-night!"

"In jail, you say? Well, that remains to be seen. But take me to her, meanwhile."

The soldiers led her to the bandits' camp, where they had collected the trophies of their raid—to wit, the cloak which had covered Orso, an old cooking-pot, and a pitcher of cold water. On the same spot she found Miss Nevil, who had fallen among the soldiers, and, being half dead with terror, did nothing but sob in answer to their questions as to the number of the bandits, and the direction in which they had gone.

Colomba threw herself into her arms and whispered in her ear, "They are safe!" Then, turning to the sergeant, she said: "Sir, you can see this young lady knows none of the things you are trying to find out from her. Give us leave to go back to the village, where we are anxiously expected."

"You'll be taken there, and faster than you like,

my beauty," rejoined the sergeant. "And you'll have to explain what you were after at this time of night with the ruffians who have just got away. I don't know what witchcraft those villains practise, but they certainly do bewitch the women—for wherever there are bandits about, you are dead certain to find pretty girls."

"You're very flattering, sergeant!" said Colomba, "but you'd do well to be careful what you say. This young lady is related to the prefect, and you'd better be careful of your language before her."

"A relation of the prefect's," whispered one of the soldiers to his chief. "Why, she does wear a hat!"

"Hats have nothing to do with it," said the sergeant. "They were both of them with the Padre—the greatest woman-wheedler in the whole country, so it's my business to march them off. And, indeed, there's nothing more for us to do here. But for that d——d Corporal Taupin—the drunken Frenchman showed himself before I'd surrounded the *mâquis*—we should have had them all like fish in a net."

"Are there only seven of you here?" inquired Colomba. "It strikes me, gentlemen, that if the three Poli brothers—Gambini, Sarocchi, and Teodoro—should happen to be at the Cross of Santa Christina, with Brandolaccio and the Padre, they might give you a good deal of corn to grind. If you mean to have a talk with the Commandante della Campagna,* I'd just

* The title assumed by Teodoro Poli.

as soon not be there. In the dark, bullets don't show any respect for persons."

The idea of coming face to face with the dreaded bandits mentioned by Colomba made an evident impression on the soldiers. The sergeant, still cursing Corporal Taupin—"that dog of a Frenchman"—gave the order to retire, and his little party moved toward Pietranera, carrying the *pilone* and the cooking-pot; as for the pitcher, its fate was settled with a kick.

One of the men would have laid hold of Miss Lydia's arm, but Colomba instantly pushed him away.

"Let none of you dare to lay a finger on her!" she said. "Do you fancy we want to run away? Come, Lydia, my dear, lean on me, and don't cry like a baby. We've had an adventure, but it will end all right. In half an hour we shall be at our supper, and for my part I'm dying to get to it."

"What will they think of me!" Miss Nevil whispered.

"They'll think you lost your way in the *mâquis*, that's all."

"What will the prefect say? Above all, what will my father say?"

"The prefect? You can tell him to mind his own business! Your father? I should have thought, from the way you and Orso were talking, that you had something to say to your father."

Miss Nevil squeezed her arm, and answered nothing.

"Doesn't my brother deserve to be loved?" whispered Colomba in her ear. "Don't you love him a little?"

"Oh, Colomba!" answered Miss Nevil, smiling in spite of her blushes, "you've betrayed me! And I trusted you so!"

Colomba slipped her arm round her, and kissed her forehead.

"Little sister," she whispered very low, "will you forgive me?"

"Why, I suppose I must, my masterful sister," answered Lydia, as she kissed her back.

The prefect and the public prosecutor were staying with the deputy-mayor, and the colonel, who was very uneasy about his daughter, was paying them his twentieth call, to ask if they had heard of her, when a rifleman, whom the sergeant had sent on in advance, arrived with the full story of the great fight with the brigands—a fight in which nobody had been either killed or wounded, but which had resulted in the capture of a cooking-pot, a *pilone*, and two girls, whom the man described as the mistresses, or the spies, of the two bandits.

Thus heralded, the two prisoners appeared, surrounded by their armed escort.

My readers will imagine Colomba's radiant face, her companion's confusion, the prefect's surprise, the colonel's astonishment and joy. The public prosecutor permitted himself the mischievous entertainment of obliging poor Lydia to undergo a kind of cross-examina-

tion, which did not conclude until he had quite put her out of countenance.

"It seems to me," said the prefect, "that we may release everybody. These young ladies went out for a walk—nothing is more natural in fine weather. They happened to meet a charming young man, who has been lately wounded—nothing could be more natural, again." Then, taking Colomba aside—

"Signorina," he said, "you can send word to your brother that this business promises to turn out better than I had expected. The post-mortem examination and the colonel's deposition both prove that he only defended himself, and that he was alone when the fight took place. Everything will be settled—only he must leave the *mâquis* and give himself up to the authorities."

It was almost eleven o'clock when the colonel, his daughter, and Colomba sat down at last to their supper, which had grown cold. Colomba ate heartily, and made great fun of the prefect, the public prosecutor, and the soldiers. The colonel ate too, but never said a word, and gazed steadily at his daughter, who would not lift her eyes from her plate. At last, gently but seriously, he said in English:

"Lydia, I suppose you are engaged to della Rebbia?"

"Yes, father, to-day," she answered, steadily, though she blushed. Then she raised her eyes, and reading no sign of anger in her father's face, she threw herself into his arms and kissed him,

as all well-brought-up young ladies do on such occasions.

"With all my heart!" said the colonel. "He's a fine fellow. But, by G—d, we won't live in this d——d country of his, or I'll refuse my consent."

"I don't know English," said Colomba, who was watching them with an air of the greatest curiosity, "but I'll wager I've guessed what you are saying!"

"We are saying," quoth the colonel, "that we are going to take you for a trip to Ireland."

"Yes, with pleasure; and I'll be the Surella Colomba. Is it settled, colonel? Shall we shake hands on it?"

"In such a case," remarked the colonel, "people exchange kisses!"

CHAPTER XX

One afternoon, a few months after the double shot which, as the newspapers said, "plunged the village of Pietranera into a state of consternation," a young man with his left arm in a sling, rode out of Bastia, toward the village of Cardo, celebrated for its spring, which in summer supplies the more fastidious inhabitants of the town with delicious water. He was accompanied by a young lady, tall and remarkably handsome, mounted on a small black horse, the strength and shape of which would have attracted the admiration of a connoisseur, although, by some strange accident, one of its ears had been lacerated. On reaching the village, the girl sprang nimbly to the ground, and, having helped her comrade to dismount, she unfastened the somewhat heavy wallets strapped to his saddle-bow. The horses were left in charge of a peasant. The girl, laden with the wallets, which she had concealed under her *mezzaro*, and the young man, carrying a double-barrelled gun, took their way toward the mountain, along a very steep path that did not appear to lead to any dwelling. When they had climbed to one of the lower ridges of the Monte Querico, they halted, and sat down on the grass. They were evidently expecting

somebody, for they kept perpetually looking toward the mountain, and the young lady often consulted a pretty gold watch—as much, it may be, for the pleasure of admiring what appeared a somewhat newly acquired trinket, as in order to know whether the hour appointed for some meeting or other had come. They had not long to wait. A dog ran out of the *mâquis*, and when the girl called out "Brusco!" it approached at once, and fawned upon them. Presently two bearded men appeared, with guns under their arms, cartridge-belts round their waists, and pistols hanging at their sides. Their torn and patched garments contrasted oddly with their weapons, which were brilliantly polished, and came from a famous Continental factory. In spite of the apparent inequality of their positions, the four actors in this scene greeted one another in terms of old and familiar friendship.

"Well, Ors' Anton'," said the elder bandit to the young man, "so your business is settled—the indictment against you has fallen through? I congratulate you. I'm sorry the lawyer has left the island. I'd like to see his rage. And how's your arm?"

"They tell me I shall get rid of my sling in a fortnight," said the young man. "Brando, my good friend, I'm going to Italy to-morrow—I wanted to say good-bye to you and to the curé. That's why I asked you to come here."

"You're in a fine hurry," said Brandolaccio. "Only acquitted yesterday, and you're off to-morrow."

"Business must be attended to," said the young

lady merrily. "Gentlemen, I've brought some supper. Fall to, if you please, and don't you forget my friend Brusco."

"You spoil Brusco, Mademoiselle Colomba. But he's a grateful dog. You shall see. Here, Brusco," and he held out his gun horizontally, "jump for the Barricini!"

The dog stood motionless, licking his chops, and staring at his master.

"Jump for the della Rebbia!" And he leaped two feet higher than he need have done.

"Look here, my friends," said Orso, "you're plying a bad trade; and even if you don't end your career on that square down below us,* the best you can look for is to die in the *mâquis* by some gendarme's bullet."

"Well, well," said Castriconi, "that's no more than death, anyhow; and it's better than being killed in your bed by a fever, with your heirs snivelling more or less honestly all round you. To men who are accustomed to the open air like us, there's nothing so good as to die 'in your shoes,' as the village folk say."

"I should like to see you get out of this country," said Orso, "and lead a quieter life. For instance, why shouldn't you settle in Sardinia, as several of your comrades have done? I could make the matter easy for you."

"In Sardinia!" cried Brandolaccio. "*Istos Sardos!* Devil take them and their lingo! We couldn't live in such bad company."

* The square at Bastia on which executions take place.

"Sardinia's a country without resources," added the theologian. "For my part, I despise the Sardinians. They keep mounted men to hunt their bandits. That's a stigma on both the bandits and the country.* Out upon Sardinia, say I! The thing that astounds me, Signor della Rebbia, is that you, who are a man of taste and understanding, should not have taken to our life in the *mâquis*, after having once tried it, as you did."

"Well," said Orso, with a smile, "when I was lucky enough to be your guest, I wasn't in very good case for enjoying the charms of your position, and my ribs still ache when I think of the ride I took one lovely night, thrown like a bundle across an unsaddled horse that my good friend Brandolaccio guided."

"And the delight of escaping from your pursuers," rejoined Castriconi; "is that nothing to you? How can you fail to realize the charms of absolute freedom in such a beautiful climate as ours? With this to insure respect," and he held up his gun, "we are kings of everything within its range. We can give orders, we can redress wrongs. That's a highly moral entertainment, monsieur, and a very pleasant one, which we don't deny ourselves. What can be more beautiful than a knight-errant's life, when he has good weapons, and more common sense than Don Quixote

* I owe this criticism of Sardinia to an ex-bandit of my acquaintance, and he alone must bear the responsibility of it. He means that bandits who let themselves be caught by horse soldiers are idiots, and that soldiers who try to catch bandits on horseback have very little chance of getting at them.

had? Listen! The other day I was told that little Lilla Luigi's uncle—old miser that he is—wouldn't give her a dowry. So I wrote to him. I didn't use threats—that's not my way. Well, well, in one moment the man was convinced. He married his niece, and I made two people happy. Believe me, Orso, there's no life like the bandit's life! Pshaw! You'd have joined us, perhaps, if it hadn't been for a certain young Englishwoman whom I have scarcely seen myself, but about whose beauty every one in Bastia is talking."

"My future sister-in-law doesn't like the *mâquis*," laughed Colomba. "She got too great a fright in one of them."

"Well," said Orso, "you are resolved to stay here? So be it! But tell me whether there is anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," said Brandolaccio. "You've heaped kindnesses upon us. Here's little Chilina with her dowry ready, so that there'll be no necessity for my friend the curé to write one of his persuasive letters to insure her marrying well. We know the man on your farm will give us bread and powder whenever we need them. So fare you well! I hope we shall see you back in Corsica one of these days."

"In case of pressing need," said Orso, "a few gold coins are very useful. Now we are such old friends, you won't refuse this little *cartouche*.* It will help you to provide cartridges of another kind."

* *Cartouche* means a collection of gold pieces as well as a cartridge.

"No money between you and me, sir," said Brandolaccio resolutely.

"In the world money is everything," remarked Castriconi, "but in the *mâquis*, all a man need care for is a brave heart, and a gun that carries true."

"I don't want to leave you without giving you something to remember me by," persisted Orso. "Come, Brandolaccio, what can I leave with you?"

The bandit scratched his head and cast a sidelong glance at Orso's gun.

"By my faith, if I dared—but no! you're too fond of it."

"What would you like?"

"Nothing! 'Tisn't anything at all. It's knowing how to use it as well. I keep thinking of that devil of a double shot of yours—and with only one hand, too! Oh! that never could happen twice over!"

"Is it the gun you fancy? I brought it for you. But see you don't use it more than you are obliged."

"Oh, I won't promise to make as good use of it as you. But make your mind easy. When any other man has it, you may be certain it's all over with Brando Savelli."

"And you, Castriconi—what am I to give you?"

"Since you really insist on giving me some tangible keepsake, I'll simply ask you to send me the smallest Horace you can get. It will amuse me, and prevent me from forgetting all my Latin. There's a little woman who sells cigars on the jetty at Bastia. If you give it to her, she'll see I get it."

"You shall have an Elzevir, my erudite friend. There just happens to be one among some books I was going to take away with me. Well, good friends, we must part! Give me your hands. If you should ever think of Sardinia write to me. Signor N., the notary, will give you my address on the mainland."

"To-morrow, lieutenant," said Brando, "when you get out in the harbour, look up to this spot on the mountain-side. We shall be here, and we'll wave our handkerchiefs to you."

And so they parted. Orso and his sister took their way back to Cardo, and the bandits departed up the mountain.

CHAPTER XXI

One lovely April morning, Sir Thomas Nevil, his daughter—a newly made bride—Orso, and Colomba, drove out of Pisa to see a lately discovered Etruscan vault to which all strangers who came to that part of the country paid a visit.

Orso and his wife went down into the ancient building, pulled out their pencils, and began to sketch the mural paintings. But the colonel and Colomba, who neither of them cared much for archæology, left them to themselves, and walked about in the neighbourhood.

"My dear Colomba," said the colonel, "we shall never get back to Pisa in time for lunch. Aren't you hungry? There are Orso and his wife buried in their antiquities; when once they begin sketching together, it lasts forever!"

"Yes," remarked Colomba. "And yet they never bring the smallest sketch home with them."

"I think," proceeded the colonel, "our best plan would be to make our way to that little farm-house yonder. We should find bread there, and perhaps some *aleatico*. Who knows, we might even find strawberries and cream! And then we should be able to wait patiently for our artists."

"You are quite right, colonel. You and I are the reasonable members of this family. We should be very foolish if we let ourselves be martyrized by that pair of lovers, who live on poetry! Give me your arm! Don't you think I'm improving? I lean on people's arms, wear fashionable hats and gowns and trinkets—I'm learning I don't know how many fine things—I'm not at all a young savage any more. Just observe the grace with which I wear this shawl. That fair-haired spark—that officer belonging to your regiment who came to the wedding—oh, dear! I can't recollect his name!—a tall, curly-headed man, whom I could knock over with one hand——"

"Chatsworth?" suggested the colonel.

"That's it!—but I never shall be able to say it!—Well, you know he's over head and ears in love with me!"

"O Colomba, you're growing a terrible flirt! We shall have another wedding before long."

"I! Marry! And then who will there be to bring up my nephew—when Orso provides me with a nephew? And who'll teach him to talk Corsican? Yes, he shall talk Corsican, and I'll make him a peaked cap, just to vex you."

"Well, well, wait till you have your nephew, and then you shall teach him to use a dagger, if you choose."

"Farewell to daggers!" said Colomba merrily. "I have a fan now, to rap your fingers with when you speak ill of my country."

Chatting thus, they reached the farm-house, where they found wine, strawberries, and cream. Colomba helped the farmer's wife to gather the strawberries, while the colonel drank his *aleatico*. At the turning of a path she caught sight of an old man, sitting in the sun, on a straw chair. He seemed ill, his cheeks were fallen in, his eyes were hollow, he was frightfully thin; as he sat there, motionless, pallid, staring fixedly in front of him, he looked more like a corpse than like a living creature. Colomba watched him for some minutes, and with a curiosity so great that it attracted the woman's attention.

"That poor old fellow is a countryman of yours," she said. "For I know you are from Corsica by the way you talk, signorina! He has had great trouble in his own country. His children met with some terrible death. They say—you'll excuse me, signorina—that when they quarrel, your compatriots don't show each other very much mercy. Then the poor old gentleman, being left all alone, came over to Pisa, to a distant relation of his, who owns this farm. Between his misfortunes and his sorrow, the good man is a little cracked. . . . The lady found him troublesome—for she sees a great deal of company. So she sent him out here. He's very gentle—no worry at all. He doesn't speak three words the whole day long. In fact, his brain's quite gone. The doctor comes to see him every week. He says he won't live long."

"There's no hope for him, then!" said Colomba. "In such a case, death will be a mercy."

"You might say a word to him in Corsican, signorina. Perhaps it would cheer him up to the hear the speech of his own country."

"I'll see!" said Colomba, and her smile was mysterious.

She drew nearer to the old man, till her shadow fell across his chair. Then the poor idiot lifted his head and stared at Colomba, while she looked at him, smiling still. After a moment, the old man passed his hand across his forehead, and closed his eyes, as though he would have shut out the sight of Colomba. He opened them again, desperately wide this time. His lips began to work, he tried to stretch out his hands, but, fascinated by Colomba's glance, he sat, nailed, as it were, to his chair, unable to move or utter a word. At last great tears dropped from his eyes, and a few sobs escaped from his heaving chest.

"'Tis the first time I've seen him like this," said the good woman. "This signorina belongs to your own country; she has come to see you," said she to the old man.

"Mercy!" he cried in a hoarse voice. "Mercy! Are you not content? The leaf I burned. How did you read it? But why did you take them both? Orlanduccio! You can't have read anything against him! You should have left me one, only one! Orlanduccio—you didn't read *his* name!"

"I had to have them both!" answered Colomba, speaking low and in the Corsican dialect. "The branches are lopped off! If the stem had not been rot-

ten, I would have torn it up! Come! make no moan. You will not suffer long! *I* suffered for two years!"

The old man cried out, and then his head dropped on his breast. Colomba turned her back on him, and went slowly into the house, humming some meaningless lines out of a *ballata*:

> "I must have the hand
> that fired, the eye that aimed, the heart
> that planned."

While the farmer's wife ran to attend on the old man, Colomba, with blazing eyes and brilliant cheeks, sat down to luncheon opposite the colonel.

"What's the matter with you?" he said. "You look just as you did that day at Pietranera, when they fired at us while we were at dinner."

"Old Corsican memories had come back to me. But all that's done with. I shall be godmother, sha'n't I? Oh! what fine names I'll give him! Ghilfuccio—Tomaso—Orso—Leone!"

The farmer's wife came back into the room.

"Well?" inquired Colomba, with the most perfect composure. "Is he dead, or had he only fainted?"

"It was nothing, signorina. But it's curious what an effect the sight of you had on him."

"And the doctor says he won't last long?"

"Not two months, very likely."

"He'll be no great loss!" remarked Colomba.

"What the devil are you talking about?" inquired the colonel.

"About an idiot from my own country, who is

boarded out here. I'll send from time to time to find out how he is. Why, Colonel Nevil, aren't you going to leave any strawberries for Lydia and my brother?"

When Colomba left the farm-house and got into the carriage, the farmer's wife looked after her for a while. Then, turning to her daughter:

"Dost see that pretty young lady yonder?" she said. "Well, I'm certain she has the evil eye!"

THE END OF COLOMBA

CARMEN

CHAPTER I

I HAD always suspected the geographical authorities did not know what they were talking about when they located the battlefield of Munda in the county of the Bastuli-Poeni, close to the modern Monda, some two leagues north of Marbella.

According to my own surmise, founded on the text of the anonymous author of the *Bellum Hispaniense*, and on certain information culled from the excellent library owned by the Duke of Ossuna, I believed the site of the memorable struggle in which Cæsar played double or quits, once and for all, with the champions of the Republic, should be sought in the neighbourhood of Montilla.

Happening to be in Andalusia during the autumn of 1830, I made a somewhat lengthy excursion, with the object of clearing up certain doubts which still oppressed me. A paper which I shall shortly publish will, I trust, remove any hesitation that may still exist in the minds of all honest archæologists. But before that dissertation of mine finally settles the geographical problem on the solution of which the whole of learned Eu-

rope hangs, I desire to relate a little tale. It will do no prejudice to the interesting question of the correct locality of Monda.

I had hired a guide and a couple of horses at Cordova, and had started on my way with no luggage save a few shirts, and Cæsar's *Commentaries*. As I wandered, one day, across the higher lands of the Cachena plain, worn with fatigue, parched with thirst, scorched by a burning sun, cursing Cæsar and Pompey's sons alike, most heartily, my eye lighted, at some distance from the path I was following, on a little stretch of green sward dotted with reeds and rushes. That betokened the neighbourhood of some spring, and, indeed, as I drew nearer I perceived that what had looked like sward was a marsh, into which a stream, which seemed to issue from a narrow gorge between two high spurs of the Sierra di Cabra, ran and disappeared.

If I rode up that stream, I argued, I was likely to find cooler water, fewer leeches and frogs, and mayhap a little shade among the rocks.

At the mouth of the gorge, my horse neighed, and another horse, invisible to me, neighed back. Before I had advanced a hundred paces, the gorge suddenly widened, and I beheld a sort of natural amphitheatre, thoroughly shaded by the steep cliffs that lay all around it. It was impossible to imagine any more delightful halting place for a traveller. At the foot of the precipitous rocks, the stream bubbled upward and fell into a little basin, lined with sand that was as white as snow. Five or six splendid evergreen oaks, sheltered from the wind,

and cooled by the spring, grew beside the pool, and shaded it with their thick foliage. And round about it a close and glossy turf offered the wanderer a better bed than he could have found in any hostelry for ten leagues round.

The honour of discovering this fair spot did not belong to me. A man was resting there already—sleeping, no doubt—before I reached it. Roused by the neighing of the horses, he had risen to his feet and had moved over to his mount, which had been taking advantage of its master's slumbers to make a hearty feed on the grass that grew around. He was an active young fellow, of middle height, but powerful in build, and proud and sullen-looking in expression. His complexion, which may once have been fine, had been tanned by the sun till it was darker than his hair. One of his hands grasped his horse's halter. In the other he held a brass blunderbuss.

At the first blush, I confess, the blunderbuss, and the savage looks of the man who bore it, somewhat took me aback. But I had heard so much about robbers, that, never seeing any, I had ceased to believe in their existence. And further, I had seen so many honest farmers arm themselves to the teeth before they went out to market, that the sight of firearms gave me no warrant for doubting the character of any stranger. "And then," quoth I to myself, "what could he do with my shirts and my Elzevir edition of Cæsar's *Commentaries*?" So I bestowed a friendly nod on the man with the blunderbuss, and inquired, with a smile, whether I

had disturbed his nap. Without any answer, he looked me over from head to foot. Then, as if the scrutiny had satisfied him, he looked as closely at my guide, who was just coming up. I saw the guide turn pale, and pull up with an air of evident alarm. "An unlucky meeting!" thought I to myself. But prudence instantly counselled me not to let any symptom of anxiety escape me. So I dismounted. I told the guide to take off the horses' bridles, and kneeling down beside the spring, I laved my head and hands and then drank a long draught, lying flat on my belly, like Gideon's soldiers.

Meanwhile, I watched the stranger, and my own guide. This last seemed to come forward unwillingly. But the other did not appear to have any evil designs upon us. For he had turned his horse loose, and the blunderbuss, which he had been holding horizontally, was now dropped earthward.

Not thinking it necessary to take offence at the scant attention paid me, I stretched myself full length upon the grass, and calmly asked the owner of the blunderbuss whether he had a light about him. At the same time I pulled out my cigar-case. The stranger, still without opening his lips, took out his flint, and lost no time in getting me a light. He was evidently growing tamer, for he sat down opposite to me, though he still grasped his weapon. When I had lighted my cigar, I chose out the best I had left, and asked him whether he smoked.

"Yes, señor," he replied. These were the first words I had heard him speak, and I noticed that he did not

pronounce the letter *s** in the Andalusian fashion, whence I concluded he was a traveller, like myself, though, maybe, somewhat less of an archæologist.

"You'll find this a fairly good one," said I, holding out a real Havana regalia.

He bowed his head slightly, lighted his cigar at mine, thanked me with another nod, and began to smoke with a most lively appearance of enjoyment.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he blew his first puff of smoke slowly out of his ears and nostrils. "What a time it is since I've had a smoke!"

In Spain the giving and accepting of a cigar establishes bonds of hospitality similar to those founded in Eastern countries on the partaking of bread and salt. My friend turned out more talkative than I had hoped. However, though he claimed to belong to the *partido* of Montilla, he seemed very ill-informed about the country. He did not know the name of the delightful valley in which we were sitting, he could not tell me the names of any of the neighbouring villages, and when I inquired whether he had not noticed any broken-down walls, broad-rimmed tiles, or carved stones in the vicinity, he confessed he had never paid any heed to such matters. On the other hand, he showed himself an expert in horseflesh, found fault with my mount—not a difficult affair—and gave me the pedigree of his own, which

* The Andalusians aspirate the *s*, and pronounce it like the soft *c* and the *z*, which Spaniards pronounce like the English *th*. An Andalusian may always be recognised by the way in which he says *señor*.

had come from the famous stud at Cordova. It was a splendid creature, indeed, so tough, according to its owner's claim, that it had once covered thirty leagues in one day, either at the gallop or at full trot the whole time. In the midst of his story the stranger pulled up short, as if startled and sorry he had said so much. "The fact is I was in a great hurry to get to Cordova," he went on, somewhat embarrassed. "I had to petition the judges about a lawsuit." As he spoke, he looked at my guide Antonio, who had dropped his eyes.

The spring and the cool shade were so delightful that I bethought me of certain slices of an excellent ham, which my friends at Montilla had packed into my guide's wallet. I bade him produce them, and invited the stranger to share our impromptu lunch. If he had not smoked for a long time, he certainly struck me as having fasted for eight-and-forty hours at the very least. He ate like a starving wolf, and I thought to myself that my appearance must really have been quite providential for the poor fellow. Meanwhile my guide ate but little, drank still less, and spoke never a word, although in the earlier part of our journey he had proved himself a most unrivalled chatterer. He seemed ill at ease in the presence of our guest, and a sort of mutual distrust, the cause of which I could not exactly fathom, seemed to lie between them.

The last crumbs of bread and scraps of ham had disappeared. We had each smoked our second cigar; I told the guide to bridle the horses, and was just about

to take leave of my new friend, when he inquired where I was going to spend the night.

Before I had time to notice a sign my guide was making to me I had replied that I was going to the Venta del Cuervo.

"That's a bad lodging for a gentleman like you, sir! I'm bound there myself, and if you'll allow me to ride with you, we'll go together."

"With pleasure!" I replied, mounting my horse. The guide, who was holding my stirrup, looked at me meaningly again. I answered by shrugging my shoulders, as though to assure him I was perfectly easy in my mind, and we started on our way.

Antonio's mysterious signals, his evident anxiety, a few words dropped by the stranger, above all, his ride of thirty leagues, and the far from plausible explanation he had given us of it, had already enabled me to form an opinion as to the identity of my fellow-traveller. I had no doubt at all I was in the company of a smuggler, and possibly of a brigand. What cared I? I knew enough of the Spanish character to be very certain I had nothing to fear from a man who had eaten and smoked with me. His very presence would protect me in case of any undesirable meeting. And besides, I was very glad to know what a brigand was really like. One doesn't come across such gentry every day. And there is a certain charm about finding one's self in close proximity to a dangerous being, especially when one feels the being in question to be gentle and tame.

I was hoping the stranger might gradually fall into

a confidential mood, and in spite of my guide's winks, I turned the conversation to the subject of highwaymen. I need scarcely say that I spoke of them with great respect. At that time there was a famous brigand in Andalusia, of the name of José-María, whose exploits were on every lip. "Supposing I should be riding along with José-María!" said I to myself. I told all the stories I knew about the hero—they were all to his credit, indeed, and loudly expressed my admiration of his generosity and his valour.

"José-María is nothing but a blackguard," said the stranger gravely.

"Is he just to himself, or is this an excess of modesty?" I queried, mentally, for by dint of scrutinizing my companion, I had ended by reconciling his appearance with the description of José-María which I read posted up on the gates of various Andalusian towns. "Yes, this must be he—fair hair, blue eyes, large mouth, good teeth, small hands, fine shirt, a velvet jacket with silver buttons on it, white leather gaiters, and a bay horse. Not a doubt about it. But his *incognito* shall be respected!" We reached the *venta*. It was just what he had described to me. In other words, the most wretched hole of its kind I had as yet beheld. One large apartment served as kitchen, dining-room, and sleeping chamber. A fire was burning on a flat stone in the middle of the room, and the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof, or rather hung in a cloud some feet above the soil. Along the walls five or six old mule rugs were spread on the floor. These were the travellers' beds.

Twenty paces from the house, or rather from the solitary apartment which I have just described, stood a sort of shed, that served for a stable.

The only inhabitants of this delightful dwelling visible at the moment, at all events, were an old woman, and a little girl of ten or twelve years old, both of them as black as soot, and dressed in loathsome rags. "Here's the sole remnant of the ancient populations of Munda Bœtica," said I to myself. "O Cæsar! O Sextus Pompeius, if you were to revisit this earth how astounded you would be!"

When the old woman saw my travelling companion an exclamation of surprise escaped her. "Ah! Señor Don José!" she cried.

Don José frowned and lifted his hand with a gesture of authority that forthwith silenced the old dame.

I turned to my guide and gave him to understand, by a sign that no one else perceived, that I knew all about the man in whose company I was about to spend the night. Our supper was better than I expected. On a little table, only a foot high, we were served with an old rooster, fricasseed with rice and numerous peppers, then more peppers in oil, and finally a *gaspacho*—a sort of salad made of peppers. These three highly spiced dishes involved our frequent recourse to a goatskin filled with Montella wine, which struck us as being delicious.

After our meal was over, I caught sight of a mandolin hanging up against the wall—in Spain you see mandolins in every corner—and I asked the little

girl, who had been waiting on us, if she knew how to play it.

"No," she replied. "But Don José does play well!"

"Do me the kindness to sing me something," I said to him, "I'm passionately fond of your national music."

"I can't refuse to do anything for such a charming gentleman, who gives me such excellent cigars," responded Don José gaily, and having made the child give him the mandolin, he sang to his own accompaniment. His voice, though rough, was pleasing, the air he sang was strange and sad. As to the words, I could not understand a single one of them.

"If I am not mistaken," said I, "that's not a Spanish air you have just been singing. It's like the *zorzicos* I've heard in the Provinces,* and the words must be in the Basque language."

"Yes," said Don José, with a gloomy look. He laid the mandolin down on the ground, and began staring with a peculiarly sad expression at the dying fire. His face, at once fierce and noble-looking, reminded me, as the firelight fell on it, of Milton's Satan. Like him, perchance, my comrade was musing over the home he had forfeited, the exile he had earned, by some misdeed. I tried to revive the conversation, but so absorbed was he in melancholy thought, that he gave me no answer.

The old woman had already gone to rest in a cor-

* The *privileged Provinces*, Alava, Biscay, Guipuzcoa, and a part of Navarre, which all enjoy special *fueros*. The Basque language is spoken in these countries.

ner of the room, behind a ragged rug hung on a rope. The little girl had followed her into this retreat, sacred to the fair sex. Then my guide rose, and suggested that I should go with him to the stable. But at the word Don José, waking, as it were, with a start, inquired sharply whither he was going.

"To the stable," answered my guide.

"What for? the horses have been fed! You can sleep here. The señor will give you leave."

"I'm afraid the señor's horse is sick. I'd like the señor to see it. Perhaps he'd know what should be done for it."

It was quite clear to me that Antonio wanted to speak to me apart.

But I did not care to rouse Don José's suspicions, and being as we were, I thought far the wisest course for me was to appear absolutely confident.

I therefore told Antonio that I knew nothing on earth about horses, and that I was desperately sleepy. Don José followed him to the stable, and soon returned alone. He told me there was nothing the matter with the horse, but that my guide considered the animal such a treasure that he was scrubbing it with his jacket to make it sweat, and expected to spend the night in that pleasing occupation. Meanwhile I had stretched myself out on the mule rugs, having carefully wrapped myself up in my own cloak, so as to avoid touching them. Don José, having begged me to excuse the liberty he took in placing himself so near me, lay down across the door, but not until he had primed his blunderbuss afresh and

carefully laid it under the wallet, which served him as a pillow.

I had thought I was so tired that I should be able to sleep even in such a lodging. But within an hour a most unpleasant itching sensation roused me from my first nap. As soon as I realized its nature, I rose to my feet, feeling convinced I should do far better to spend the rest of the night in the open air than beneath that inhospitable roof. Walking tiptoe I reached the door, stepped over Don José, who was sleeping the sleep of the just, and managed so well that I got outside the building without waking him. Just beside the door there was a wide wooden bench. I lay down upon it, and settled myself, as best I could, for the remainder of the night. I was just closing my eyes for the second time when I fancied I saw the shadow of a man and then the shadow of a horse moving absolutely noiselessly, one behind the other. I sat upright, and then I thought I recognised Antonio. Surprised to see him outside the stable at such an hour, I got up and went toward him. He had seen me first, and had stopped to wait for me.

"Where is he?" Antonio inquired in a low tone.

"In the *venta*. He's asleep. The bugs don't trouble him. But what are you going to do with that horse?" I then noticed that, to stifle all noise as he moved out of the shed, Antonio had carefully muffled the horse's feet in the rags of an old blanket.

"Speak lower, for God's sake," said Antonio. "You don't know who that man is. He's José Navarro,

the most noted bandit in Andalusia. I've been making signs to you all day long, and you wouldn't understand."

"What do I care whether he's a brigand or not," I replied. "He hasn't robbed us, and I'll wager he doesn't want to."

"That may be. But there are two hundred ducats on his head. Some lancers are stationed in a place I know, a league and a half from here, and before daybreak I'll bring a few brawny fellows back with me. I'd have taken his horse away, but the brute's so savage that nobody but Navarro can go near it."

"Devil take you!" I cried. "What harm has the poor fellow done you that you should want to inform against him? And besides, are you certain he is the brigand you take him for?"

"Perfectly certain! He came after me into the stable just now, and said, 'You seem to know me. If you tell that good gentleman who I am, I'll blow your brains out!' You stay here, sir, keep close to him. You've nothing to fear. As long as he knows you are there, he won't suspect anything."

As we talked, we had moved so far from the *venta* that the noise of the horse's hoofs could not be heard there. In a twinkling Antonio snatched off the rags he had wrapped around the creature's feet, and was just about to climb on its back. In vain did I attempt with prayers and threats to restrain him.

"I'm only a poor man, señor," quoth he, "I can't afford to lose two hundred ducats—especially when I shall earn them by ridding the country of such vermin.

But mind what you're about! If Navarro wakes up, he'll snatch at his blunderbuss, and then look out for yourself! I've gone too far now to turn back. Do the best you can for yourself!"

The villain was in his saddle already, he spurred his horse smartly, and I soon lost sight of them both in the darkness.

I was very angry with my guide, and terribly alarmed as well. After a moment's reflection, I made up my mind, and went back to the *venta*. Don José was still sound asleep, making up, no doubt, for the fatigue and sleeplessness of several days of adventure. I had to shake him roughly before I could wake him up. Never shall I forget his fierce look, and the spring he made to get hold of his blunderbuss, which, as a precautionary measure, I had removed to some distance from his couch.

"Señor," I said, "I beg your pardon for disturbing you. But I have a silly question to ask you. Would you be glad to see half a dozen lancers walk in here?"

He bounded to his feet, and in an awful voice he demanded:

"Who told you?"

"It's little matter whence the warning comes, so long as it be good."

"Your guide has betrayed me—but he shall pay for it! Where is he?"

"I don't know. In the stable, I fancy. But somebody told me——"

"Who told you? It can't be the old hag——"

"Some one I don't know. Without more parleying, tell me, yes or no, have you any reason for not waiting till the soldiers come? If you have any, lose no time! If not, good-night to you, and forgive me for having disturbed your slumbers!"

"Ah, your guide! your guide! I had my doubts of him at first—but—I'll settle with him! Farewell, señor. May God reward you for the service I owe you! I am not quite so wicked as you think me. Yes, I still have something in me that an honest man may pity. Farewell, señor! I have only one regret—that I can not pay my debt to you!"

"As a reward for the service I have done you, Don José, promise me you'll suspect nobody—nor seek for vengeance. Here are some cigars for your journey. Good luck to you." And I held out my hand to him.

He squeezed it, without a word, took up his wallet and blunderbuss, and after saying a few words to the old woman in a lingo that I could not understand, he ran out to the shed. A few minutes later I heard him galloping out into the country.

As for me, I lay down again on my bench, but I did not go to sleep again. I queried in my own mind whether I had done right to save a robber, and possibly a murderer, from the gallows, simply and solely because I had eaten ham and rice in his company. Had I not betrayed my guide, who was supporting the cause of law and order? Had I not exposed him to a ruffian's vengeance? But then, what about the laws of hospitality?

"A mere savage prejudice," said I to myself. "I shall have to answer for all the crimes this brigand may commit in future." Yet is that instinct of the conscience which resists every argument really a prejudice? It may be I could not have escaped from the delicate position in which I found myself without remorse of some kind. I was still tossed to and fro, in the greatest uncertainty as to the morality of my behaviour, when I saw half a dozen horsemen ride up, with Antonio prudently lagging behind them. I went to meet them, and told them the brigand had fled over two hours previously. The old woman, when she was questioned by the sergeant, admitted that she knew Navarro, but said that living alone, as she did, she would never have dared to risk her life by informing against him. She added that when he came to her house, he habitually went away in the middle of the night. I, for my part, was made to ride to a place some leagues away, where I showed my passport, and signed a declaration before the *Alcalde*. This done, I was allowed to recommence my archæological investigations. Antonio was sulky with me; suspecting it was I who had prevented his earning those two hundred ducats. Nevertheless, we parted good friends at Cordova, where I gave him as large a gratuity as the state of my finances would permit.

CHAPTER II

I SPENT several days at Cordova. I had been told of a certain manuscript in the library of the Dominican convent which was likely to furnish me with very interesting details about the ancient Munda. The good fathers gave me the most kindly welcome. I spent the daylight hours within their convent, and at night I walked about the town. At Cordova a great many idlers collect, toward sunset, on the quay that runs along the right bank of the Guadalquivir. Promenaders on the spot have to breathe the odour of a tan-yard which still keeps up the ancient fame of the country in connection with the curing of leather. But to atone for this, they enjoy a sight which has a charm of its own. A few minutes before the Angelus bell rings, a great company of women gathers beside the river, just below the quay, which is rather a high one. Not a man would dare to join its ranks. The moment the Angelus rings, darkness is supposed to have fallen. As the last stroke sounds, all the women disrobe and step into the water. Then there is laughing and screaming, and a wonderful clatter. The men on the upper quay watch the bathers, straining their eyes, and seeing very little. Yet the white uncertain outlines perceptible

against the dark-blue waters of the stream stir the poetic mind, and the possessor of a little fancy finds it not difficult to imagine that Diana and her nymphs are bathing below, while he himself runs no risk of ending like Acteon.

I have been told that one day a party of good-for-nothing fellows banded themselves together, and bribed the bell-ringer at the cathedral to ring the Angelus some twenty minutes before the proper hour. Though it was still broad daylight, the nymphs of the Guadalquivir never hesitated, and putting far more trust in the Angelus bell than in the sun, they proceeded to their bathing toilette—always of the simplest—with an easy conscience. I was not present on that occasion. In my day, the bell-ringer was incorruptible, the twilight was very dim, and nobody but a cat could have distinguished the difference between the oldest orange woman, and the prettiest shop-girl, in Cordova.

One evening, after it had grown quite dusk, I was leaning over the parapet of the quay, smoking, when a woman came up the steps leading from the river, and sat down near me. In her hair she wore a great bunch of jasmine—a flower which, at night, exhales a most intoxicating perfume. She was dressed simply, almost poorly, in black, as most work-girls are dressed in the evening. Women of the richer class only wear black in the daytime, at night they dress *à la francesa*. When she drew near me, the woman let the mantilla which had covered her head drop on her shoulders, and "by the dim light falling from the stars" I perceived her to

be young, short in stature, well-proportioned, and with very large eyes. I threw my cigar away at once. She appreciated this mark of courtesy, essentially French, and hastened to inform me that she was very fond of the smell of tobacco, and that she even smoked herself, when she could get very mild *papelitos*. I fortunately happened to have some such in my case, and at once offered them to her. She condescended to take one, and lighted it at a burning string which a child brought us, receiving a copper for its pains. We mingled our smoke, and talked so long, the fair lady and I, that we ended by being almost alone upon the quay. I thought I might venture, without impropriety, to suggest our going to eat an ice at the *nevería*.* After a moment of modest demur, she agreed. But before finally accepting, she desired to know what o'clock it was. I struck my repeater, and this seemed to astound her greatly.

"What clever inventions you foreigners do have! What country do you belong to, sir? You're an Englishman, no doubt!" †

"I'm a Frenchman, and your devoted servant. And you, señora, or señorita, you probably belong to Cordova?"

"No."

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* A *café* to which a depot of ice, or rather of snow, is attached. There is hardly a village in Spain without its *nevería*.

† Every traveller in Spain who does not carry about samples of calicoes and silks is taken for an Englishman (*inglesito*). It is the same thing in the East. At Chalcis I had the honour of being announced as a Μιλόρδος Φραντσέος.

"At all events, you are an Andalusian? Your soft way of speaking makes me think so."

"If you notice people's accent so closely, you must be able to guess what I am."

"I think you are from the country of Jesus, two paces out of Paradise."

I had learned this metaphor, which stands for Andalusia, from my friend Francisco Sevilla, a well-known *picador*.

"Pshaw! The people here say there is no place in Paradise for us!"

"Then perhaps you are of Moorish blood—or——" I stopped, not venturing to add "a Jewess."

"Oh come! You must see I'm a gipsy! Wouldn't you like me to tell you *la baji*? * Did you never hear tell of Carmencita? That's who I am!"

I was such a miscreant in those days—now fifteen years ago—that the close proximity of a sorceress did not make me recoil in horror. "So be it!" I thought. "Last week I ate my supper with a highway robber. To-day I'll go and eat ices with a servant of the devil. A traveller should see everything." I had yet another motive for prosecuting her acquaintance. When I left college—I acknowledge it with shame—I had wasted a certain amount of time in studying occult science, and had even attempted, more than once, to exorcise the powers of darkness. Though I had been cured, long since, of my passion for such investigations, I still felt a

* Your fortune.

certain attraction and curiosity with regard to all superstitions, and I was delighted to have this opportunity of discovering how far the magic art had developed among the gipsies.

Talking as we went, we had reached the *nevería*, and seated ourselves at a little table, lighted by a taper protected by a glass globe. I then had time to take a leisurely view of my *gitana*, while several worthy individuals, who were eating their ices, stared open-mouthed at beholding me in such gay company.

I very much doubt whether the Señorita Carmen was a pure-blooded gipsy. At all events, she was infinitely prettier than any other woman of her race I have ever seen. For a woman to be beautiful, they say in Spain, she must fulfil thirty *ifs*, or, if it please you better, you must be able to define her appearance by ten adjectives, applicable to three portions of her person.

For instance, three things about her must be black, her eyes, her eyelashes, and her eyebrows. Three must be dainty, her fingers, her lips, her hair, and so forth. For the rest of this inventory, see Brantôme. My gipsy girl could lay no claim to so many perfections. Her skin, though perfectly smooth, was almost of a copper hue. Her eyes were set obliquely in her head, but they were magnificent and large. Her lips, a little full, but beautifully shaped, revealed a set of teeth as white as newly skinned almonds. Her hair—a trifle coarse, perhaps—was black, with blue lights on it like a raven's wing, long and glossy. Not to weary my readers with too prolix a description, I will merely add, that to every

blemish she united some advantage, which was perhaps all the more evident by contrast. There was something strange and wild about her beauty. Her face astonished you, at first sight, but nobody could forget it. Her eyes, especially, had an expression of mingled sensuality and fierceness which I had never seen in any other human glance. "Gipsy's eye, wolf's eye!" is a Spanish saying which denotes close observation. If my readers have no time to go to the "Jardin des Plantes" to study the wolf's expression, they will do well to watch the ordinary cat when it is lying in wait for a sparrow.

It will be understood that I should have looked ridiculous if I had proposed to have my fortune told in a *café*. I therefore begged the pretty witch's leave to go home with her. She made no difficulties about consenting, but she wanted to know what o'clock it was again, and requested me to make my repeater strike once more.

"Is it really gold?" she said, gazing at it with rapt attention.

When we started off again, it was quite dark. Most of the shops were shut, and the streets were almost empty. We crossed the bridge over the Guadalquivir, and at the far end of the suburb we stopped in front of a house of anything but palatial appearance. The door was opened by a child, to whom the gipsy spoke a few words in a language unknown to me, which I afterward understood to be *Romany*, or *chipe calli*—the gipsy idiom. The child instantly disappeared, leaving us in

sole possession of a tolerably spacious room, furnished with a small table, two stools, and a chest. I must not forget to mention a jar of water, a pile of oranges, and a bunch of onions.

As soon as we were left alone, the gipsy produced, out of her chest, a pack of cards, bearing signs of constant usage, a magnet, a dried chameleon, and a few other indispensable adjuncts of her art. Then she bade me cross my left hand with a silver coin, and the magic ceremonies duly began. It is unnecessary to chronicle her predictions, and as for the style of her performance, it proved her to be no mean sorceress.

Unluckily we were soon disturbed. The door was suddenly burst open, and a man, shrouded to the eyes in a brown cloak, entered the room, apostrophizing the gipsy in anything but gentle terms. What he said I could not catch, but the tone of his voice revealed the fact that he was in a very evil temper. The gipsy betrayed neither surprise nor anger at his advent, but she ran to meet him, and with a most striking volubility, she poured out several sentences in the mysterious language she had already used in my presence. The word *payllo*, frequently reiterated, was the only one I understood. I knew that the gipsies use it to describe all men not of their own race. Concluding myself to be the subject of this discourse, I was prepared for a somewhat delicate explanation. I had already laid my hand on the leg of one of the stools, and was studying within myself to discover the exact moment at which I had better throw it at his head, when, roughly pushing

the gipsy to one side, the man advanced toward me. Then with a step backward he cried:

"What, sir! is it you?"

I looked at him in my turn and recognised my friend Don José. At that moment I did feel rather sorry I had saved him from the gallows.

"What, is it you, my good fellow?" I exclaimed, with as easy a smile as I could muster. "You have interrupted this young lady just when she was foretelling me most interesting things!"

"The same as ever. There shall be an end to it!" he hissed between his teeth, with a savage glance at her.

Meanwhile the *gitana* was still talking to him in her own tongue. She became more and more excited. Her eyes grew fierce and bloodshot, her features contracted, she stamped her foot. She seemed to me to be earnestly pressing him to do something he was unwilling to do. What this was I fancied I understood only too well, by the fashion in which she kept drawing her little hand backward and forward under her chin. I was inclined to think she wanted to have somebody's throat cut, and I had a fair suspicion the throat in question was my own. To all her torrent of eloquence Don José's only reply was two or three shortly spoken words. At this the gipsy cast a glance of the most utter scorn at him, then, seating herself Turkish-fashion in a corner of the room, she picked out an orange, tore off the skin, and began to eat it.

Don José took hold of my arm, opened the door, and led me into the street. We walked some two hun-

dred paces in the deepest silence. Then he stretched out his hand.

"Go straight on," he said, "and you'll come to the bridge."

That instant he turned his back on me and departed at a great pace. I took my way back to my inn, rather crestfallen, and considerably out of temper. The worst of all was that, when I undressed, I discovered my watch was missing.

Various considerations prevented me from going to claim it next day, or requesting the *Corregidor* to be good enough to have a search made for it. I finished my work on the Dominican manuscript, and went on to Seville. After several months spent wandering hither and thither in Andalusia, I wanted to get back to Madrid, and with that object I had to pass through Cordova. I had no intention of making any stay there, for I had taken a dislike to that fair city, and to the ladies who bathed in the Guadalquivir. Nevertheless, I had some visits to pay, and certain errands to do, which must detain me several days in the old capital of the Mussulman princes.

The moment I made my appearance in the Dominican convent, one of the monks, who had always shown the most lively interest in my inquiries as to the site of the battlefield of Munda, welcomed me with open arms, exclaiming:

"Praised be God! You are welcome! my dear friend! We all thought you were dead, and I myself have said many a *pater* and *ave* (not that I regret them!)

for your soul. Then you weren't murdered, after all? That you were robbed, we know!"

"What do you mean?" I asked, rather astonished.

"Oh, you know! That splendid repeater you used to strike in the library whenever we said it was time for us to go into church. Well, it has been found, and you'll get it back."

"Why," I broke in, rather put out of countenance, "I lost it——"

"The rascal's under lock and key, and as he was known to be a man who would shoot any Christian for the sake of a *peseta*, we were most dreadfully afraid he had killed you. I'll go with you to the *Corregidor*, and he'll give you back your fine watch. And after that, you won't dare to say the law doesn't do its work properly in Spain."

"I assure you," said I, "I'd far rather lose my watch than have to give evidence in court to hang a poor unlucky devil, and especially because—because——"

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed! He's thoroughly done for; they might hang him twice over. But when I say hang, I say wrong. Your thief is an *Hidalgo*. So he's to be garrotted the day after to-morrow, without fail.* So you see one theft more or less won't affect his position. Would to God he had done nothing but steal! But he has committed several murders, one more hideous than the other."

* In 1830 the noble class still enjoyed this privilege. Nowadays, under the constitutional *régime*, commoners have attained the same dignity.

"What's his name?"

"In this country he is only known as José Navarro, but he has another Basque name, which neither you nor I will ever be able to pronounce. By the way, the man is worth seeing, and you, who like to study the peculiar features of each country, shouldn't lose this chance of noting how a rascal bids farewell to this world in Spain. He is in jail, and Father Martinez will take you to him."

So bent was my Dominican friend on my seeing the preparations for this "neat little hanging job" that I was fain to agree. I went to see the prisoner, having provided myself with a bundle of cigars, which I hoped might induce him to forgive my intrusion.

I was ushered into Don José's presence just as he was sitting at table. He greeted me with a rather distant nod, and thanked me civilly for the present I had brought him. Having counted the cigars in the bundle I had placed in his hand, he took out a certain number and returned me the rest, remarking that he would not need any more of them.

I inquired whether by laying out a little money, or by applying to my friends, I might not do something to soften his lot. He shrugged his shoulders, to begin with, smiling sadly. Soon, as by an after-thought, he asked me to have a mass said for the repose of his soul.

Then he added nervously: "Would you—would you have another said for a person who did you a wrong?"

"Assuredly I will, my dear fellow," I answered. "But no one in this country has wronged me so far as I know."

He took my hand and squeezed it, looking very grave. After a moment's silence, he spoke again.

"Might I dare to ask another service of you? When you go back to your own country perhaps you will pass through Navarre. At all events you'll go by Vittoria, which isn't very far off."

"Yes," said I, "I shall certainly pass through Vittoria. But I may very possibly go round by Pampeluna, and for your sake, I believe I should be very glad to do it."

"Well, if you do go to Pampeluna, you'll see more than one thing that will interest you. It's a fine town. I'll give you this medal," he showed me a little silver medal that he wore hung around his neck. "You'll wrap it up in paper"—he paused a moment to master his emotion—"and you'll take it, or send it, to an old lady whose address I'll give you. Tell her I am dead—but don't tell her how I died."

I promised to perform his commission. I saw him the next day, and spent part of it in his company. From his lips I learned the sad incidents that follow.

CHAPTER III

"I was born," he said, "at Elizondo, in the valley of Baztan. My name is Don José Lizzarrabengoa, and you know enough of Spain, sir, to know at once, by my name, that I come of an old Christian and Basque stock. I call myself Don, because I have a right to it, and if I were at Elizondo I could show you my parchment genealogy. My family wanted me to go into the church, and made me study for it, but I did not like work. I was too fond of playing tennis, and that was my ruin. When we Navarrese begin to play tennis, we forget everything else. One day, when I had won the game, a young fellow from Alava picked a quarrel with me. We took to our *maquilas*,* and I won again. But I had to leave the neighbourhood. I fell in with some dragoons, and enlisted in the Almanza Cavalry Regiment. Mountain folks like us soon learn to be soldiers. Before long I was a corporal, and I had been told I should soon be made a sergeant, when, to my misfortune, I was put on guard at the Seville Tobacco Factory. If you have been to Seville you have seen the great building, just outside the ramparts, close to the

* Iron-shod sticks used by the Basques.

Guadalquivir; I can fancy I see the entrance, and the guard room just beside it, even now. When Spanish soldiers are on duty, they either play cards or go to sleep. I, like an honest Navarrese, always tried to keep myself busy. I was making a chain to hold my priming-pin, out of a bit of wire: all at once, my comrades said, 'There's the bell ringing, the girls are coming back to work.' You must know, sir, that there are quite four or five hundred women employed in the factory. They roll the cigars in a great room into which no man can go without a permit from the *Veintiquatro*,* because when the weather is hot they make themselves at home, especially the young ones. When the work-girls come back after their dinner, numbers of young men go down to see them pass by, and talk all sorts of nonsense to them. Very few of those young ladies will refuse a silk mantilla, and men who care for that sort of sport have nothing to do but bend down and pick their fish up. While the others watched the girls go by, I stayed on my bench near the door. I was a young fellow then—my heart was still in my own country, and I didn't believe in any pretty girls who hadn't blue skirts and long plaits of hair falling on their shoulders.† And besides, I was rather afraid of the Andalusian women. I had not got used to their ways yet; they were always jeering one—never spoke a single word of sense. So I

* Magistrate in charge of the municipal police arrangements, and local government regulations.

† The costume usually worn by peasant women in Navarre and the Basque Provinces.

was sitting with my nose down upon my chain, when I heard some bystanders say, 'Here comes the *gitanella!*' Then I lifted up my eyes, and I saw her! It was on a Friday, and I shall never forget it. I saw that very Carmen you know, and in whose room I met you a few months ago.

"She was wearing a very short red skirt, below which her white silk stockings—with more than one hole in them—and her dainty red morocco shoes, fastened with flame-coloured ribbons, were clearly seen. She had thrown her mantilla back, to show her shoulders, and a great bunch of acacia that was thrust into her chemise. She had another acacia blossom in the corner of her mouth, and she walked along, swaying her hips, like a filly from the Cordova stud farm. In my country anybody who had seen a woman dressed in that fashion would have crossed himself. At Seville every man paid her some bold compliment on her appearance. She had an answer for each and all, with her hand on her hip, as bold as the thorough gipsy she was. At first I didn't like her looks, and I fell to my work again. But she, like all women and cats, who won't come if you call them, and do come if you don't call them, stopped short in front of me, and spoke to me.

"'*Compadre*,' said she, in the Andalusian fashion, 'won't you give me your chain for the keys of my strong box?'

"'It's for my priming-pin,' said I.

"'Your priming-pin!' she cried, with a laugh.

'Oho! I suppose the gentleman makes lace, as he wants pins!'

"Everybody began to laugh, and I felt myself getting red in the face, and couldn't hit on anything in answer.

"'Come, my love!' she began again, 'make me seven ells of lace for my mantilla, my pet pin-maker!'

"And taking the acacia blossom out of her mouth she flipped it at me with her thumb so that it hit me just between the eyes. I tell you, sir, I felt as if a bullet had struck me. I didn't know which way to look. I sat stock-still, like a wooden board. When she had gone into the factory, I saw the acacia blossom, which had fallen on the ground between my feet. I don't know what made me do it, but I picked it up, unseen by any of my comrades, and put it carefully inside my jacket. That was my first folly.

"Two or three hours later I was still thinking about her, when a panting, terrified-looking porter rushed into the guard-room. He told us a woman had been stabbed in the great cigar-room, and that the guard must be sent in at once. The sergeant told me to take two men, and go and see to it. I took my two men and went upstairs. Imagine, sir, that when I got into the room, I found, to begin with, some three hundred women, stripped to their shifts, or very near it, all of them screaming and yelling and gesticulating, and making such a row that you couldn't have heard God's own thunder. On one side of the room one of the women was lying on the broad of her back, streaming with

blood, with an X newly cut on her face by two strokes of a knife. Opposite the wounded woman, whom the best-natured of the band were attending, I saw Carmen, held by five or six of her comrades. The wounded woman was crying out, 'A confessor, a confessor! I'm killed!' Carmen said nothing at all. She clinched her teeth and rolled her eyes like a chameleon. 'What's this?' I asked. I had hard work to find out what had happened, for all the work-girls talked at once. It appears that the injured girl had boasted she had money enough in her pocket to buy a donkey at the Triana Market. 'Why,' said Carmen, who had a tongue of her own, 'can't you do with a broom?' Stung by this taunt, it may be because she felt herself rather unsound in that particular, the other girl replied that she knew nothing about brooms, seeing she had not the honour of being either a gipsy or one of the devil's godchildren, but that the Señorita Carmen would shortly make acquaintance with her donkey, when the *Corregidor* took her out riding with two lackeys behind her to keep the flies off. 'Well,' retorted Carmen, 'I'll make troughs for the flies to drink out of on your cheeks, and I'll paint a draught-board on them!' * And thereupon, slap, bang! she began making St. Andrew's crosses on the girl's face with a knife she had been using for cutting off the ends of the cigars.

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* *Pintar un javeque*, "paint a xebec," a particular type of ship. Most Spanish vessels of this description have a checkered red and white stripe painted around them.

"The case was quite clear. I took hold of Carmen's arm. 'Sister mine,' I said civilly, 'you must come with me.' She shot a glance of recognition at me, but she said, with a resigned look: 'Let's be off. Where is my mantilla?' She put it over her head so that only one of her great eyes was to be seen, and followed my two men, as quiet as a lamb. When we got to the guard-room the sergeant said it was a serious job, and he must send her to prison. I was told off again to take her there. I put her between two dragoons, as a corporal does on such occasions. We started off for the town. The gipsy had begun by holding her tongue. But when we got to the *Calle de la Serpiente*—you know it, and that it earns its name by its many windings—she began by dropping her mantilla on to her shoulders, so as to show me her coaxing little face, and turning round to me as well as she could, she said:

"'*Oficial mío*, where are you taking me to?'

"'To prison, my poor child,' I replied, as gently as I could, just as any kind-hearted soldier is bound to speak to a prisoner, and especially to a woman.

"'Alack! what will become of me! Señor Oficial, have pity on me! You are so young, so good-looking.' Then, in a lower tone, she said, 'Let me get away, and I'll give you a bit of the *bar lachi*, that will make every woman fall in love with you!'

"The *bar lachi*, sir, is the loadstone, with which the gipsies declare one who knows how to use it can cast any number of spells. If you can make a woman drink a little scrap of it, powdered, in a glass of white wine,

she'll never be able to resist you. I answered, as gravely as I could:

"'We are not here to talk nonsense. You'll have to go to prison. Those are my orders, and there's no help for it!'

"We men from the Basque country have an accent which all Spaniards easily recognise; on the other hand, not one of them can ever learn to say *Baï, jaona*! *

"So Carmen easily guessed I was from the Provinces. You know, sir, that the gipsies, who belong to no particular country, and are always moving about, speak every language, and most of them are quite at home in Portugal, in France, in our Provinces, in Catalonia, or anywhere else. They can even make themselves understood by Moors and English people. Carmen knew Basque tolerably well.

"'*Laguna ene bihotsarena*, comrade of my heart,' said she suddenly. 'Do you belong to our country?'

"Our language is so beautiful, sir, that when we hear it in a foreign country it makes us quiver. I wish," added the bandit in a lower tone, "I could have a confessor from my own country."

After a silence, he began again.

"'I belong to Elizondo,' I answered in Basque, very much affected by the sound of my own language.

"'I come from Etchalar,' said she (that's a district about four hours' journey from my home). 'I was carried off to Seville by the gipsies. I was working in the factory to earn enough money to take me back to Na-

* Yes, sir.

varre, to my poor old mother, who has no support in the world but me, besides her little *barratcea* * with twenty cider-apple trees in it. Ah! if I were only back in my own country, looking up at the white mountains! I have been insulted here, because I don't belong to this land of rogues and sellers of rotten oranges; and those hussies are all banded together against me, because I told them that not all their Seville *jacques*,† and all their knives, would frighten an honest lad from our country, with his blue cap and his *maquila*! Good comrade, won't you do anything to help your own countrywoman?'

"She was lying then, sir, as she has always lied. I don't know that that girl ever spoke a word of truth in her life, but when she did speak, I believed her—I couldn't help myself. She mangled her Basque words, and I believed she came from Navarre. But her eyes and her mouth and her skin were enough to prove she was a gipsy. I was mad, I paid no more attention to anything, I thought to myself that if the Spaniards had dared to speak evil of my country, I would have slashed their faces just as she had slashed her comrade's. In short, I was like a drunken man, I was beginning to say foolish things, and I was very near doing them.

"'If I were to give you a push and you tumbled down, good fellow-countryman,' she began again in Basque, 'those two Castilian recruits wouldn't be able to keep me back.'

"Faith, I forgot my orders, I forgot everything, and

* Field, garden. † Bravos, boasters.

I said to her, 'Well, then, my friend, girl of my country, try it, and may our Lady of the Mountain help you through.'

"Just at that moment we were passing one of the many narrow lanes one sees in Seville. All at once Carmen turned and struck me in the chest with her fist. I tumbled down backward, purposely. With a bound she sprang over me, and ran off, showing us a pair of legs! People talk about a pair of Basque legs! but hers were far better—as fleet as they were well-turned. As for me, I picked myself up at once, but I stuck out my lance * crossways and barred the street, so that my comrades were checked at the very first moment of pursuit. Then I started to run myself, and they after me—but how were we to catch her? There was no fear of that, what with our spurs, our swords, and our lances.

"In less time than I have taken to tell you the story, the prisoner had disappeared. And besides, every gossip in the quarter covered her flight, poked scorn at us, and pointed us in the wrong direction. After a good deal of marching and countermarching, we had to go back to the guard-room without a receipt from the governor of the jail.

"To avoid punishment, my men made known that Carmen had spoken to me in Basque; and to tell the truth, it did not seem very natural that a blow from such a little creature should have so easily overthrown a strong fellow like me. The whole thing looked suspicious, or, at all events, not over-clear.

* All Spanish cavalry soldiers carry lances.

When I came off guard I lost my corporal's stripes, and was condemned to a month's imprisonment. It was the first time I had been punished since I had been in the service. Farewell, now, to the sergeant's stripes, on which I had reckoned so surely!

"The first days in prison were very dreary. When I enlisted I had fancied I was sure to become an officer, at all events. Two of my compatriots, Longa and Mina, are captains-general, after all. Chapalangarra was a colonel, and I have played tennis a score of times with his brother, who was just a needy fellow like myself. 'Now,' I kept crying to myself, 'all the time you served without being punished has been lost. Now you have a bad mark against your name, and to get yourself back into the officers' good graces you'll have to work ten times as hard as when you joined as a recruit.' And why have I got myself punished? For the sake of a gipsy hussy, who made game of me, and who at this moment is busy thieving in some corner of the town. Yet I couldn't help thinking about her. Will you believe it, sir, those silk stockings of hers with the holes in them, of which she had given me such a full view as she took to her heels, were always before my eyes? I used to look through the barred windows of the jail into the street, and among all the women who passed I never could see one to compare with that minx of a girl—and then, in spite of myself, I used to smell the acacia blossom she had thrown at me, and which, dry as it was, still kept its sweet scent. If there are such things as witches, that girl certainly was one.

"One day the jailer came in, and gave me an Alcala roll.*

"'Look here,' said he, 'this is what your cousin has sent you.'

"I took the loaf, very much astonished, for I had no cousin in Seville. It may be a mistake, thought I, as I looked at the roll, but it was so appetizing and smelt so good, that I made up my mind to eat it, without troubling my head as to whence it came, or for whom it was really intended.

"When I tried to cut it, my knife struck on something hard. I looked, and found a little English file, which had been slipped into the dough before the roll had been baked. The roll also contained a gold piece of two piastres. Then I had no further doubt—it was a present from Carmen. To people of her blood, liberty is everything, and they would set a town on fire to save themselves one day in prison. The girl was artful, indeed, and armed with that roll, I might have snapped my fingers at the jailers. In one hour, with that little file, I could have sawn through the thickest bar, and with the gold coin I could have exchanged my soldier's cloak for civilian garb at the nearest shop. You may fancy that a man who had often taken the eaglets out of their nests in our cliff would have found no difficulty in getting down to the street out of a window less than

* *Alcala de los Panaderos*, a village two leagues from Seville, where the most delicious rolls are made. They are said to owe their quality to the water of the place, and great quantities of them are brought to Seville every day.

thirty feet above it. But I didn't choose to escape. I still had a soldier's code of honour, and desertion appeared to me in the light of a heinous crime. Yet this proof of remembrance touched me. When a man is in prison he likes to think he has a friend outside who takes an interest in him. The gold coin did rather offend me; I should have very much liked to return it; but where was I to find my creditor? That did not seem a very easy task.

"After the ceremony of my degradation I had fancied my sufferings were over, but I had another humiliation before me. That came when I had left prison, and was told off for duty, and put on sentry, as a private soldier. You can not conceive what a proud man endures at such a moment. I believe I would have just as soon been shot dead—then I should have marched alone at the head of my platoon, at all events; I should have felt I was somebody, with the eyes of others fixed upon me.

"I was posted as sentry on the door of the colonel's house. The colonel was a young man, rich, good-natured, fond of amusing himself. All the young officers were there, and many civilians as well, besides ladies—actresses, as it was said. For my part, it seemed to me as if the whole town had agreed to meet at that door, in order to stare at me. Then up drove the colonel's carriage, with his valet on the box. And who should I see get out of it, but the gipsy girl! She was dressed up, this time, to the eyes, togged out in golden ribbons—a spangled gown, blue shoes, all spangled too, flowers and

gold lace all over her. In her hand she carried a tambourine. With her there were two other gipsy women, one young and one old. They always have one old woman who goes with them, and then an old man with a guitar, a gipsy too, to play alone, and also for their dances. You must know these gipsy girls are often sent for to private houses, to dance their special dance, the *Romalis*, and often, too, for quite other purposes.

"Carmen recognised me, and we exchanged glances. I don't know why, but at that moment I should have liked to have been a hundred feet beneath the ground.

"'*Agur laguna*,'* said she. 'Oficial mío! You keep guard like a recruit,' and before I could find a word in answer, she was inside the house.

"The whole party was assembled in the *patio*, and in spite of the crowd I could see nearly everything that went on through the lattice.† I could hear the castanets and the tambourine, the laughter and applause. Sometimes I caught a glimpse of her head as she bounded upward with her tambourine. Then I could hear the officers saying many things to her which brought the blood to my face. As to her answers, I knew nothing of them. It was on that day, I think, that I began to

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* Good-day, comrade!

† In most of the houses in Seville there is an inner court surrounded by an arched portico. This is used as a sitting-room in summer. Over the court is stretched a piece of tent cloth, which is watered during the day and removed at night. The street door is almost always left open, and the passage leading to the court (*zaguan*) is closed by an iron lattice of very elegant workmanship.

love her in earnest—for three or four times I was tempted to rush into the *patio*, and drive my sword into the bodies of all the coxcombs who were making love to her. My torture lasted a full hour; then the gipsies came out, and the carriage took them away. As she passed me by, Carmen looked at me with those eyes you know, and said to me very low, 'Comrade, people who are fond of good *fritata* come to eat it at Lillas Pastia's at Triana!'

"Then, light as a kid, she stepped into the carriage, the coachman whipped up his mules, and the whole merry party departed, whither I know not.

"You may fancy that the moment I was off guard I went to Triana; but first of all I got myself shaved and brushed myself up as if I had been going on parade. She was living with Lillas Pastia, an old fried-fish seller, a gipsy, as black as a Moor, to whose house a great many civilians resorted to eat *fritata*, especially, I think, because Carmen had taken up her quarters there.

"'Lillas,' she said, as soon as she saw me, 'I'm not going to work any more to-day. To-morrow will be a day, too.* Come, fellow-countryman, let us go for a walk!'

"She pulled her mantilla across her nose, and there we were in the street, without my knowing in the least whither I was bound.

"'Señorita,' said I, 'I think I have to thank you for a present I had while I was in prison. I've eaten the bread; the file will do for sharpening my lance, and I

* *Mañana será otro día.*—A Spanish proverb.

keep it in remembrance of you. But as for the money, here it is.'

"'Why, he's kept the money!' she exclaimed, bursting out laughing. 'But, after all, that's all the better—for I'm decidedly hard up! What matter! The dog that runs never starves! * Come, let's spend it all! You shall stand treat.'

"We had turned back toward Seville. At the entrance of the *Calle de la Serpiente* she bought a dozen oranges, which she made me put into my handkerchief. A little farther on she bought a roll, a sausage, and a bottle of manzanilla. Then, last of all, she turned into a confectioner's shop. There she threw the gold coin I had returned to her on the counter, with another she had in her pocket, and some small silver, and then she asked me for all the money I had. All I possessed was one peseta and a few cuartos, which I handed over to her, very much ashamed of not having more. I thought she would have carried away the whole shop. She took everything that was best and dearest, *yemas*,† *turon*,‡ preserved fruits—as long as the money lasted. And all these, too, I had to carry in paper bags. Perhaps you know the *Calle del Candilejo*, where there is a head of Don Pedro the Avenger.# That head ought to

* *Chuquel sos pirela, cocal tercia.* "The dog that runs finds a bone."—Gipsy proverb.

† Sugared yolks of eggs.

‡ A sort of nougat.

This king, Don Pedro, whom we call "the Cruel," and whom Queen Isabella, the Catholic, never called anything but "the Avenger," was fond of walking about the streets of Seville at night in search of adventures, like the Caliph Haroun al Raschid. One night,

have given me pause. We stopped at an old house in that street. She passed into the entry, and knocked at a door on the ground floor. It was opened by a gipsy, a thorough-paced servant of the devil. Carmen said a few words to her in Romany. At first the old hag grumbled. To smooth her down Carmen gave her a couple of oranges and a handful of sugar-plums, and let her have a taste of the wine. Then she hung her cloak on her back, and led her to the door, which she fastened with

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in a lonely street, he quarrelled with a man who was singing a serenade. There was a fight, and the king killed the amorous *caballero*. At the clashing of their swords, an old woman put her head out of the window and lighted up the scene with a tiny lamp (*candilejo*) which she held in her hand. My readers must be informed that King Don Pedro, though nimble and muscular, suffered from one strange fault in his physical conformation. Whenever he walked his knees cracked loudly. By this cracking the old woman easily recognised him.

The next day the *veintiquatro* in charge came to make his report to the king. "Sire, a duel was fought last night in such a street—one of the combatants is dead." "Have you found the murderer?" "Yes, sire." "Why has he not been punished already?" "Sire, I await your orders!" "Carry out the law." Now the king had just published a decree that every duellist was to have his head cut off, and that the head was to be set up on the scene of the fight. The *veintiquatro* got out of the difficulty like a clever man. He had the head sawed off a statue of the king, and set that up in a niche in the middle of the street in which the murder had taken place. The king and all the Sevillians thought this a very good joke. The street took its name from the lamp held by the old woman, the only witness of the incident. The above is the popular tradition. Zuñiga tells the story somewhat differently. (See Anales de Sevilla, vol. ii, p. 136.) However that may be, a street called *Calle del Candilejo* still exists in Seville, and in that street there is a bust which is said to be a portrait of Don Pedro. This bust, unfortunately, is a modern production. During the seventeenth century the old one had become very much defaced, and the municipality had it replaced by that now to be seen.

a wooden bar. As soon as we were alone she began to laugh and caper like a lunatic, singing out, 'You are my *rom*, I'm your *romi*.' *

"There I stood in the middle of the room, laden with all her purchases, and not knowing where I was to put them down. She tumbled them all onto the floor, and threw her arms round my neck, saying:

"'I pay my debts, I pay my debts! That's the law of the *Cales*.'†

"Ah, sir, that day! that day! When I think of it I forget what to-morrow must bring me!"

For a moment the bandit held his peace, then, when he had relighted his cigar, he began afresh.

"We spent the whole day together, eating, drinking, and so forth. When she had stuffed herself with sugar-plums, like any child of six years old, she thrust them by handfuls into the old woman's water-jar. 'That'll make sherbet for her,' she said. She smashed the *yemas* by throwing them against the walls. 'They'll keep the flies from bothering us.' There was no prank or wild frolic she didn't indulge in. I told her I should have liked to see her dance, only there were no castanets to be had. Instantly she seized the old woman's only earthenware plate, smashed it up, and there she was dancing the *Romalis*, and making the bits of broken crockery rattle as well as if they had been ebony and ivory castanets. That girl was good company, I can

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* *Rom*, husband. *Romi*, wife.

† *Calo*, feminine *calli*, plural *cales*. Literally "black," the name the gipsies apply to themselves in their own language.

tell you! Evening fell, and I heard the drums beating tattoo.

"'I must get back to quarters for roll-call,' I said.

"'To quarters!' she answered, with a look of scorn. 'Are you a negro slave, to let yourself be driven with a ramrod like that! You are as silly as a canary bird. Your dress suits your nature.* Pshaw! you've no more heart than a chicken.'

"I stayed on, making up my mind to the inevitable guard-room. The next morning the first suggestion of parting came from her.

"'Hark ye, Joseito,' she said. 'Have I paid you? By our law, I owed you nothing, because you're a *payllo.* But you're a good-looking fellow, and I took a fancy to you. Now we're quits. Good-day!'

"I asked her when I should see her again.

"'When you're less of a simpleton,' she retorted, with a laugh. Then, in a more serious tone, 'Do you know, my son, I really believe I love you a little; but that can't last! The dog and the wolf can't agree for long. Perhaps if you turned gipsy, I might care to be your *romi.* But that's all nonsense, such things aren't possible. Pshaw! my boy. Believe me, you're well out of it. You've come across the devil—he isn't always black—and you've not had your neck wrung. I wear a woollen suit, but I'm no sheep.† Go and burn a candle to your *majari,*‡ she deserves it well. Come, good-bye

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* Spanish dragoons wear a yellow uniform.

† *Me dicas vriardà de jorpoy, bus ne sino braco.*—A gipsy proverb.

‡ The Saint, the Holy Virgin.

once more. Don't think any more about *La Carmencita*, or she'll end by making you marry a widow with wooden legs.' *

"As she spoke, she drew back the bar that closed the door, and once we were out in the street she wrapped her mantilla about her, and turned on her heel.

"She spoke truth. I should have done far better never to think of her again. But after that day in the *Calle del Candilejo* I couldn't think of anything else. All day long I used to walk about, hoping I might meet her. I sought news of her from the old hag, and from the fried-fish seller. They both told me she had gone away to *Laloro*, which is their name for Portugal. They probably said it by Carmen's orders, but I soon found out they were lying. Some weeks after my day in the *Calle del Candilejo* I was on duty at one of the town gates. A little way from the gate there was a breach in the wall. The masons were working at it in the daytime, and at night a sentinel was posted on it, to prevent smugglers from getting in. All through one day I saw Lillas Pastia going backward and forward near the guard-room, and talking to some of my comrades. They all knew him well, and his fried fish and fritters even better. He came up to me, and asked if I had any news of Carmen.

"'No,' said I.

"'Well,' said he, 'you'll soon hear of her, old fellow.'

"He was not mistaken. That night I was posted to

* The gallows, which is the widow of the last man hanged upon it.

guard the breach in the wall. As soon as the sergeant had disappeared I saw a woman coming toward me. My heart told me it was Carmen. Still I shouted:

"'Keep off! Nobody can pass here!'

"'Now, don't be spiteful,' she said, making herself known to me.

"'What! you here, Carmen?'

"'Yes, *mi paylło*. Let us say few words, but wise ones. Would you like to earn a douro? Some people will be coming with bundles. Let them alone.'

"'No,' said I, 'I must not allow them through. These are my orders.'

"'Orders! orders! You didn't think about orders in the *Calle del Candilejo*!'

"'Ah!' I cried, quite maddened by the very thought of that night. 'It was well worth while to forget my orders for that! But I won't have any smuggler's money!'

"'Well, if you won't have money, shall we go and dine together at old Dorotea's?'

"'No,' said I, half choked by the effort it cost me. 'No, I can't.'

"'Very good! If you make so many difficulties, I know to whom I can go. I'll ask your officer if he'll come with me to Dorotea's. He looks good-natured, and he'll post a sentry who'll only see what he had better see. Good-bye, canary-bird! I shall have a good laugh the day the order comes out to hang you!'

"I was weak enough to call her back, and I promised to let the whole of gipsydom pass in, if that were

necessary, so that I secured the only reward I longed for. She instantly swore she would keep her word faithfully the very next day, and ran off to summon her friends, who were close by. There were five of them, of whom Pastia was one, all well loaded with English goods. Carmen kept watch for them. She was to warn them with her castanets the instant she caught sight of the patrol. But there was no necessity for that. The smugglers finished their job in a moment.

"The next day I went to the *Calle del Candilejo.* Carmen kept me waiting, and when she came, she was in rather a bad temper.

"'I don't like people who have to be pressed,' she said. 'You did me a much greater service the first time, without knowing you'd gain anything by it. Yesterday you bargained with me. I don't know why I've come, for I don't care for you any more. Here, be off with you. Here's a douro for your trouble.'

"I very nearly threw the coin at her head, and I had to make a violent effort to prevent myself from actually beating her. After we had wrangled for an hour I went off in a fury. For some time I wandered about the town, walking hither and thither like a madman. At last I went into a church, and getting into the darkest corner I could find, I cried hot tears. All at once I heard a voice.

"'A dragoon in tears. I'll make a philter of them!'

"I looked up. There was Carmen in front of me.

"'Well, *mi payllo*, are you still angry with me?' she said. 'I must care for you in spite of myself, for since you left me I don't know what has been the matter with me. Look you, it is I who ask you to come to the *Calle del Candilejo*, now!'

"So we made it up: but Carmen's temper was like the weather in our country. The storm is never so close, in our mountains, as when the sun is at its brightest. She had promised to meet me again at Dorotea's, but she didn't come.

"And Dorotea began telling me again that she had gone off to Portugal about some gipsy business.

"As experience had already taught me how much of that I was to believe, I went about looking for Carmen wherever I thought she might be, and twenty times in every day I walked through the *Calle del Candilejo*. One evening I was with Dorotea, whom I had almost tamed by giving her a glass of anisette now and then, when Carmen walked in, followed by a young man, a lieutenant in our regiment.

"'Get away at once,' she said to me in Basque. I stood there, dumfounded, my heart full of rage.

"'What are you doing here?' said the lieutenant to me. 'Take yourself off—get out of this.'

"I couldn't move a step. I felt paralyzed. The officer grew angry, and seeing I did not go out, and had not even taken off my forage cap, he caught me by the collar and shook me roughly. I don't know what I said to him. He drew his sword, and I unsheathed mine. The old woman caught hold of my arm,

and the lieutenant gave me a wound on the forehead, of which I still bear the scar. I made a step backward, and with one jerk of my elbow I threw old Dorotea down. Then, as the lieutenant still pressed me, I turned the point of my sword against his body and he ran upon it. Then Carmen put out the lamp and told Dorotea, in her own language, to take to flight. I fled into the street myself, and began running along, I knew not whither. It seemed to me that some one was following me. When I came to myself I discovered that Carmen had never left me.

"'Great stupid of a canary-bird!' she said, 'you never make anything but blunders. And, indeed, you know I told you I should bring you bad luck. But come, there's a cure for everything when you have a Fleming from Rome * for your love. Begin by rolling this handkerchief round your head, and throw me over that belt of yours. Wait for me in this alley—I'll be back in two minutes.'

"She disappeared, and soon came back bringing me a striped cloak which she had gone to fetch, I knew not whence. She made me take off my uniform, and put on the cloak over my shirt. Thus dressed, and with the wound on my head bound round with the handkerchief, I was tolerably like a Valencian peasant, many of whom come to Seville to sell a drink they make out

* *Flamenco de Roma*, a slang term for the gipsies. Roma does not stand for the Eternal City, but for the nation of the *romi*, or the married folk—a name applied by the gipsies to themselves. The first gipsies seen in Spain probably came from the Low Countries, hence their name of *Flemings*.

of '*chufas*.' * Then she took me to a house very much like Dorotea's, at the bottom of a little lane. Here she and another gipsy woman washed and dressed my wounds, better than any army surgeon could have done, gave me something, I know not what, to drink, and finally made me lie down on a mattress, on which I went to sleep.

"Probably the women had mixed one of the soporific drugs of which they know the secret in my drink, for I did not wake up till very late the next day. I was rather feverish, and had a violent headache. It was some time before the memory of the terrible scene in which I had taken part on the previous night came back to me. After having dressed my wound, Carmen and her friend, squatting on their heels beside my mattress, exchanged a few words of '*chipe calli*,' which appeared to me to be something in the nature of a medical consultation. Then they both of them assured me that I should soon be cured, but that I must get out of Seville at the earliest possible moment, for that, if I was caught there, I should most undoubtedly be shot.

"'My boy,' said Carmen to me, 'you'll have to do something. Now that the king won't give you either rice or haddock † you'll have to think of earning your livelihood. You're too stupid for stealing *à pastesas*.‡ But you are brave and active. If you have the pluck,

* A bulbous root, out of which rather a pleasant beverage is manufactured.

† The ordinary food of a Spanish soldier.

‡ *Ustilar à pastesas*, to steal cleverly, to purloin without violence.

take yourself off to the coast and learn smuggler. Haven't I promised to get you hanged? That's better than being shot, and besides, if you set about it properly, you'll live like a prince as long as the *miños* * and the coast-guard don't lay their hands on your collar.'

"In this attractive guise did this fiend of a girl describe the new career she was suggesting to me,—the only one, indeed, remaining, now I had incurred the penalty of death. Shall I confess it, sir? She persuaded me without much difficulty. This wild and dangerous life, it seemed to me, would bind her and me more closely together. In future, I thought, I should be able to make sure of her love.

"I had often heard talk of certain smugglers who travelled about Andalusia, each riding a good horse, with his mistress behind him and his blunderbuss in his fist. Already I saw myself trotting up and down the world, with a pretty gipsy behind me. When I mentioned that notion to her, she laughed till she had to hold her sides, and vowed there was nothing in the world so delightful as a night spent camping in the open air, when each *rom* retired with his *romi* beneath their little tent, made of three hoops with a blanket thrown across them.

"'If I take to the mountains,' said I to her, 'I shall be sure of you. There'll be no lieutenant there to go shares with me.'

"'Ha! ha! you're jealous!' she retorted, 'so much the worse for you. How can you be such a fool as

* A sort of volunteer corps.

that? Don't you see I must love you, because I have never asked you for money?'

"When she said that sort of thing I could have strangled her.

"To shorten the story, sir, Carmen procured me civilian clothes, disguised in which I got out of Seville without being recognised. I went to Jerez, with a letter from Pastia to a dealer in anisette whose house was the smugglers' meeting-place. I was introduced to them, and their leader, surnamed *El Dancaïre*, enrolled me in his gang. We started for Gaucin, where I found Carmen, who had told me she would meet me there. In all these expeditions she acted as spy for our gang, and she was the best that ever was seen. She had now just returned from Gibraltar, and had already arranged with the captain of a ship for a cargo of English goods which we were to receive on the coast. We went to meet it near Estepona. We hid part in the mountains, and laden with the rest, we proceeded to Ronda. Carmen had gone there before us. It was she again who warned us when we had better enter the town. This first journey, and several subsequent ones, turned out well. I found the smuggler's life pleasanter than a soldier's: I could give presents to Carmen, I had money, and I had a mistress. I felt little or no remorse, for, as the gipsies say, 'The happy man never longs to scratch his itch.'* We were made welcome everywhere, my comrades treated me well, and even showed me a certain respect. The reason of this was that I had

* *Sarapia sat pesquital ne punzava.*

killed my man, and that some of them had no exploit of that description on their conscience. But what I valued most in my new life was that I often saw Carmen. She showed me more affection than ever; nevertheless, she would never admit, before my comrades, that she was my mistress, and she had even made me swear all sorts of oaths that I would not say anything about her to them. I was so weak in that creature's hands, that I obeyed all her whims. And besides, this was the first time she had revealed herself as possessing any of the reserve of a well-conducted woman, and I was simple enough to believe she had really cast off her former habits.

"Our gang, which consisted of eight or ten men, was hardly ever together except at decisive moments, and we were usually scattered by twos and threes about the towns and villages. Each one of us pretended to have some trade. One was a tinker, another was a groom; I was supposed to peddle haberdashery, but I hardly ever showed myself in large places, on account of my unlucky business at Seville. One day, or rather one night, we were to meet below Veger. *El Dancaïre* and I got there before the others.

"'We shall soon have a new comrade,' said he. 'Carmen has just managed one of her best tricks. She has contrived the escape of her *rom*, who was in the *presidio* at Tarifa.'

"I was already beginning to understand the gipsy language, which nearly all my comrades spoke, and this word *rom* startled me.

"'What! her husband? Is she married, then?' said I to the captain.

"'Yes!' he replied, 'married to Garcia *el Tuerto* *— as cunning a gipsy as she is herself. The poor fellow has been at the galleys. Carmen has wheedled the surgeon of the *presidio* to such good purpose that she has managed to get her *rom* out of prison. Faith! that girl's worth her weight in gold. For two years she has been trying to contrive his escape, but she could do nothing until the authorities took it into their heads to change the surgeon. She soon managed to come to an understanding with this new one.'

"You may imagine how pleasant this news was for me. I soon saw Garcia *el Tuerto*. He was the very ugliest brute that was ever nursed in gipsydom. His skin was black, his soul was blacker, and he was altogether the most thorough-paced ruffian I ever came across in my life. Carmen arrived with him, and when she called him her *rom* in my presence, you should have seen the eyes that she made at me, and the faces she pulled whenever Garcia turned his head away.

"I was disgusted, and never spoke a word to her all night. The next morning we had made up our packs, and had already started, when we became aware that we had a dozen horsemen on our heels. The braggart Andalusians, who had been boasting they would murder every one who came near them, cut a pitiful figure at once. There was a general rout. *El Dan-*

* One-eyed man.

caïre, Garcia, a good-looking fellow from Ecija, who was called *El Remendado*, and Carmen herself, kept their wits about them. The rest forsook the mules and took to the gorges, where the horses could not follow them. There was no hope of saving the mules, so we hastily unstrapped the best part of our booty, and, taking it on our shoulders, we tried to escape through the rocks down the steepest of the slopes. We threw our packs down in front of us and followed them as best we could, slipping along on our heels. Meanwhile the enemy fired at us. It was the first time I had ever heard bullets whistling around me and I didn't mind it very much. When there's a woman looking on, there's no particular merit in snapping one's fingers at death. We all escaped except the poor *Remendado*, who received a bullet wound in the loins. I threw away my pack and tried to lift him up.

"'Idiot!' shouted Garcia, 'what do we want with offal! Finish him off, and don't lose the cotton stockings!'

"'Drop him!' cried Carmen.

"I was so exhausted that I was obliged to lay him down for a moment under a rock. Garcia came up, and fired his blunderbuss full into his face. 'He'd be a clever fellow who recognised him now!' said he, as he looked at the face, cut to pieces by a dozen slugs.

"There, sir; that's the delightful sort of life I've led! That night we found ourselves in a thicket, worn out with fatigue, with nothing to eat, and ruined by the loss of our mules. What do you think that devil Garcia

did? He pulled a pack of cards out of his pocket and began playing games with *El Dancaïre* by the light of a fire they kindled. Meanwhile I was lying down, staring at the stars, thinking of *El Remendado*, and telling myself I would just as lief be in his place. Carmen was squatting down near me, and every now and then she would rattle her castanets and hum a tune. Then, drawing close to me, as if she would have whispered in my ear, she kissed me two or three times over almost against my will.

" ' You are a devil,' said I to her.

" ' Yes,' she replied.

" After a few hours' rest, she departed to Gaucin, and the next morning a little goatherd brought us some food. We stayed there all that day, and in the evening we moved close to Gaucin. We were expecting news from Carmen, but none came. After daylight broke we saw a muleteer attending a well-dressed woman with a parasol, and a little girl who seemed to be her servant. Said Garcia, ' There go two mules and two women whom St. Nicholas has sent us. I would rather have had four mules, but no matter. I'll do the best I can with these.'

" He took his blunderbuss, and went down the pathway, hiding himself among the brushwood.

" We followed him, *El Dancaïre* and I keeping a little way behind. As soon as we were within hail, we showed ourselves, and shouted to the muleteer to stop. When the woman saw us, instead of being frightened—and our dress would have been enough to frighten any

one—she burst into a fit of loud laughter. 'Ah! the *lillipendi*! they take me for an *erani*!' *

"It was Carmen, but so well disguised that if she had spoken any other language I should never have recognised her. She sprang off her mule, and talked some time in an undertone with *El Dancaïre* and Garcia. Then she said to me:

"'Canary-bird, we shall meet again before you're hanged. I'm off to Gibraltar on gipsy business—you'll soon have news of me.'

"We parted, after she had told us of a place where we should find shelter for some days. That girl was the providence of our gang. We soon received some money sent by her, and a piece of news which was still more useful to us—to the effect that on a certain day two English lords would travel from Gibraltar to Granada by a road she mentioned. This was a word to the wise. They had plenty of good guineas. Garcia would have killed them, but *El Dancaïre* and I objected. All we took from them, besides their shirts, which we greatly needed, was their money and their watches.

"Sir, a man may turn rogue in sheer thoughtlessness. You lose your head over a pretty girl, you fight another man about her, there is a catastrophe, you have to take to the mountains, and you turn from a smuggler into a robber before you have time to think about it. After this matter of the English lords, we concluded that the neighbourhood of Gibraltar would not be healthy for us, and we plunged into the *Sierra de*

* "The idiots, they take me for a smart lady!"

Ronda. You once mentioned José-María to me. Well, it was there I made acquaintance with him. He always took his mistress with him on his expeditions. She was a pretty girl, quiet, modest, well-mannered, you never heard a vulgar word from her, and she was quite devoted to him. He, on his side, led her a very unhappy life. He was always running after other women, he ill-treated her, and then sometimes he would take it into his head to be jealous. One day he slashed her with a knife. Well, she only doted on him the more! That's the way with women, and especially with Andalusians. This girl was proud of the scar on her arm, and would display it as though it were the most beautiful thing in the world. And then José-María was the worst of comrades in the bargain. In one expedition we made with him, he managed so that he kept all the profits, and we had all the trouble and the blows. But I must go back to my story. We had no sign at all from Carmen. *El Dancaïre* said: 'One of us will have to go to Gibraltar to get news of her. She must have planned some business. I'd go at once, only I'm too well known at Gibraltar.' *El Tuerto* said:

"'I'm well known there too. I've played so many tricks on the crayfish *—and as I've only one eye, it is not overeasy for me to disguise myself.'

"'Then I suppose I must go,' said I, delighted at the very idea of seeing Carmen again. 'Well, how am I to set about it?'

* Name applied by the Spanish populace to the British soldiers, on account of the colour of their uniform.

"The others answered:

"'You must either go by sea, or you must get through by San Rocco, whichever you like the best; once you are at Gibraltar, inquire in the port where a chocolate-seller called *La Rollona* lives. When you've found her, she'll tell you everything that's happening.'

"It was settled that we were all to start for the Sierra, that I was to leave my two companions there, and take my way to Gibraltar, in the character of a fruit-seller. At Ronda one of our men procured me a passport; at Gaucin I was provided with a donkey. I loaded it with oranges and melons, and started forth. When I reached Gibraltar I found that many people knew *La Rollona*, but that she was either dead or had gone *ad finibus terræ*,* and, to my mind, her disappearance explained the failure of our correspondence with Carmen. I stabled my donkey, and began to move about the town, carrying my oranges as though to sell them, but in reality looking to see whether I could not come across any face I knew. The place is full of ragamuffins from every country in the world, and it really is like the Tower of Babel, for you can't go ten paces along a street without hearing as many languages. I did see some gipsies, but I hardly dared confide in them. I was taking stock of them, and they were taking stock of me. We had mutually guessed each other to be rogues, but the important thing for us was to know whether we belonged to the same gang. After having spent two days in fruitless wanderings, and having

* To the galleys, or else to all the devils in hell.

found out nothing either as to *La Rollona* or as to Carmen, I was thinking I would go back to my comrades as soon as I had made a few purchases, when, toward sunset, as I was walking along a street, I heard a woman's voice from a window say, 'Orange-seller!'

"I looked up, and on a balcony I saw Carmen looking out, beside a scarlet-coated officer with gold epaulettes, curly hair, and all the appearance of a rich *milord*. As for her, she was magnificently dressed, a shawl hung on her shoulders, she'd a gold comb in her hair, everything she wore was of silk; and the cunning little wretch, not a bit altered, was laughing till she held her sides.

"The Englishman shouted to me in mangled Spanish to come upstairs, as the lady wanted some oranges, and Carmen said to me in Basque:

"'Come up, and don't look astonished at anything!'

"Indeed, nothing that she did ought ever to have astonished me. I don't know whether I was most happy or wretched at seeing her again. At the door of the house there was a tall English servant with a powdered head, who ushered me into a splendid drawing-room. Instantly Carmen said to me in Basque, 'You don't know one word of Spanish, and you don't know me.' Then turning to the Englishman, she added:

"'I told you so. I saw at once he was a Basque. Now you'll hear what a queer language he speaks. Doesn't he look silly? He's like a cat that's been caught in the larder!'

"'And you,' said I to her in my own language, 'you look like an impudent jade—and I've a good mind to scar your face here and now, before your spark.'

"'My spark!' said she. 'Why, you've guessed that all alone! Are you jealous of this idiot? You're even sillier than you were before our evening in the *Calle del Candilejo*! Don't you see, fool, that at this moment I'm doing gipsy business, and doing it in the most brilliant manner? This house belongs to me—the guineas of that crayfish will belong to me! I lead him by the nose, and I'll lead him to a place that he'll never get out of!'

"'And if I catch you doing gipsy business in this style again, I'll see to it that you never do any again!' said I.

"'Ah! upon my word! Are you my *rom*, pray, that you give me orders? If *El Tuerto* is pleased, what have you to do with it? Oughtn't you to be very happy that you are the only man who can call himself my *minchorrò*?' *

"'What does he say?' inquired the Englishman.

"'He says he's thirsty, and would like a drink,' answered Carmen, and she threw herself back upon a sofa, screaming with laughter at her own translation.

"When that girl began to laugh, sir, it was hopeless for anybody to try and talk sense. Everybody laughed with her. The big Englishman began to laugh too, like the idiot he was, and ordered the servant to bring me something to drink.

* My "lover," or rather my "fancy."

"While I was drinking she said to me:

"'Do you see that ring he has on his finger? If you like I'll give it to you.'

"And I answered:

"'I would give one of my fingers to have your *milord* out on the mountains, and each of us with a *maquila* in his fist.'

"'*Maquila*, what does that mean?' asked the Englishman.

"'*Maquila*,' said Carmen, still laughing, 'means an orange. Isn't it a queer word for an orange? He says he'd like you to eat *maquila*.'

"'Does he?' said the Englishman. 'Very well, bring more *maquila* to-morrow.'

"While we were talking a servant came in and said dinner was ready. Then the Englishman stood up, gave me a piastre, and offered his arm to Carmen, as if she couldn't have walked alone. Carmen, who was still laughing, said to me:

"'My boy, I can't ask you to dinner. But to-morrow, as soon as you hear the drums beat for parade, come here with your oranges. You'll find a better furnished room than the one in the *Calle del Candilejo*, and you'll see whether I am still your *Carmencita*. Then afterwards we'll talk about gipsy business.'

"I gave her no answer—even when I was in the street I could hear the Englishman shouting, 'Bring more *maquila* to-morrow,' and Carmen's peals of laughter.

"I went out, not knowing what I should do; I

hardly slept, and next morning I was so enraged with the treacherous creature that I made up my mind to leave Gibraltar without seeing her again. But the moment the drums began to roll, my courage failed me. I took up my net full of oranges, and hurried off to Carmen's house. Her window-shutters had been pulled apart a little, and I saw her great dark eyes watching for me. The powdered servant showed me in at once. Carmen sent him out with a message, and as soon as we were alone she burst into one of her fits of crocodile laughter and threw her arms around my neck. Never had I seen her look so beautiful. She was dressed out like a queen, and scented; she had silken furniture, embroidered curtains—and I togged out like the thief I was!

"'*Minchorrò*,' said Carmen, 'I've a good mind to smash up everything here, set fire to the house, and take myself off to the mountains.' And then she would fondle me, and then she would laugh, and she danced about and tore up her fripperies. Never did monkey gambol nor make such faces, nor play such wild tricks, as she did that day. When she had recovered her gravity—

"'Hark!' she said, 'this is gipsy business. I mean him to take me to Ronda, where I have a sister who is a nun' (here she shrieked with laughter again). 'We shall pass by a particular spot which I shall make known to you. Then you must fall upon him and strip him to the skin. Your best plan would be to do for him, but,' she added, with a certain fiendish smile of hers, which

no one who saw it ever had any desire to imitate, 'do you know what you had better do? Let *El Tuerto* come up in front of you. You keep a little behind. The crayfish is brave, and skilful too, and he has good pistols. Do you understand?'

"And she broke off with another fit of laughter that made me shiver.

"'No,' said I, 'I hate Garcia, but he's my comrade. Some day, maybe, I'll rid you of him, but we'll settle our account after the fashion of my country. It's only chance that has made me a gipsy, and in certain things I shall always be a thorough Navarrese,* as the proverb says.

"'You're a fool,' she rejoined, 'a simpleton, a regular *payllo*. You're just like the dwarf who thinks himself tall because he can spit a long way.† You don't love me! Be off with you!'

"Whenever she said to me 'Be off with you,' I couldn't go away. I promised I would start back to my comrades and wait the arrival of the Englishman. She, on her side, promised me she would be ill until she left Gibraltar for Ronda.

"I remained at Gibraltar two days longer. She had the boldness to disguise herself and come and see me at the inn. I departed, I had a plan of my own. I went back to our meeting-place with the information as to the spot and the hour at which the Englishman and

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* *Navarro fino.*

† *Or esorjle de or narsichisle, sin chisnar lachinguel.* "The promise of a dwarf is that he will spit a long way."—A gipsy proverb.

Carmen were to pass by. I found *El Dancaïre* and Garcia waiting for me. We spent the night in a wood, beside a fire made of pine-cones that blazed splendidly. I suggested to Garcia that we should play cards, and he agreed. In the second game I told him he was cheating; he began to laugh; I threw the cards in his face. He tried to get at his blunderbuss. I set my foot on it, and said, 'They say you can use a knife as well as the best ruffian in Malaga; will you try it with me?' *El Dancaïre* tried to part us. I had given Garcia one or two cuffs, his rage had given him courage, he drew his knife, and I drew mine. We both of us told *El Dancaïre* he must leave us alone, and let us fight it out. He saw there was no means of stopping us, so he stood on one side. Garcia was already bent double, like a cat ready to spring upon a mouse. He held his hat in his left hand to parry with, and his knife in front of him—that's their Andalusian guard. I stood up in the Navarrese fashion, with my left arm raised, my left leg forward, and my knife held straight along my right thigh. I felt I was stronger than any giant. He flew at me like an arrow. I turned round on my left foot, so that he found nothing in front of him. But I thrust him in the throat, and the knife went in so far that my hand was under his chin. I gave the blade such a twist that it broke. That was the end. The blade was carried out of the wound by a gush of blood as thick as my arm, and he fell full length on his face.

"'What have you done?' said *El Dancaïre* to me.

"'Hark ye,' said I, 'we couldn't live on together. I love Carmen and I mean to be the only one. And besides, Garcia was a villain. I remember what he did to that poor *Remendado*. There are only two of us left now, but we are both good fellows. Come, will you have me for your friend, for life or death?'

"*El Dancaïre* stretched out his hand. He was a man of fifty.

"'Devil take these love stories!' he cried. 'If you'd asked him for Carmen he'd have sold her to you for a piastre! There are only two of us now—how shall we manage for to-morrow?'

"'I'll manage it all alone,' I answered. 'I can snap my fingers at the whole world now.'

"We buried Garcia, and we moved our camp two hundred paces farther on. The next morning Carmen and her Englishman came along with two muleteers and a servant. I said to *El Dancaïre*:

"'I'll look after the Englishman, you frighten the others—they're not armed!'

"The Englishman was a plucky fellow. He'd have killed me if Carmen hadn't jogged his elbow.

"To put it shortly, I won Carmen back that day, and my first words were to tell her she was a widow.

"When she knew how it had all happened—

"'You'll always be a *lillipendi*,' she said. 'Garcia ought to have killed you. Your Navarrese guard is a pack of nonsense, and he has sent far more skilful men than you into the darkness. It was just that his time had come—and yours will come too.'

"'Ay, and yours too!—if you're not a faithful *romi* to me.'

"'So be it,' said she. 'I've read in the coffee grounds, more than once, that you and I were to end our lives together. Pshaw! what must be, will be!' and she rattled her castanets, as was her way when she wanted to drive away some worrying thought.

"One runs on when one is talking about one's self. I dare say all these details bore you, but I shall soon be at the end of my story. Our new life lasted for some considerable time. *El Dancaïre* and I gathered a few comrades about us, who were more trustworthy than our earlier ones, and we turned our attention to smuggling. Occasionally, indeed, I must confess we stopped travellers on the highways, but never unless we were at the last extremity, and could not avoid doing so; and besides, we never ill-treated the travellers, and confined ourselves to taking their money from them.

"For some months I was very well satisfied with Carmen. She still served us in our smuggling operations, by giving us notice of any opportunity of making a good haul. She remained either at Malaga, at Cordova, or at Granada, but at a word from me she would leave everything, and come to meet me at some *venta* or even in our lonely camp. Only once—it was at Malaga—she caused me some uneasiness. I heard she had fixed her fancy upon a very rich merchant, with whom she probably proposed to play her Gibraltar trick over again. In spite of everything *El Dancaïre* said to stop me, I started off, walked into Malaga in broad daylight,

sought for Carmen and carried her off instantly. We had a sharp altercation.

"'Do you know,' said she, 'now that you're my *rom* for good and all, I don't care for you so much as when you were my *minchorrò*! I won't be worried, and above all, I won't be ordered about. I choose to be free to do as I like. Take care you don't drive me too far; if you tire me out, I'll find some good fellow who'll serve you just as you served *El Tuerto*.'

El Dancaïre patched it up between us; but we had said things to each other that rankled in our hearts, and we were not as we had been before. Shortly after that we had a misfortune: the soldiers caught us, *El Dancaïre* and two of my comrades were killed; two others were taken. I was sorely wounded, and, but for my good horse, I should have fallen into the soldiers' hands. Half dead with fatigue, and with a bullet in my body, I sought shelter in a wood, with my only remaining comrade. When I got off my horse I fainted away, and I thought I was going to die there in the brushwood, like a shot hare. My comrade carried me to a cave he knew of, and then he sent to fetch Carmen.

"She was at Granada, and she hurried to me at once. For a whole fortnight she never left me for a single instant. She never closed her eyes; she nursed me with a skill and care such as no woman ever showed to the man she loved most tenderly. As soon as I could stand on my feet, she conveyed me with the utmost secrecy to Granada. These gipsy women find safe shelter everywhere, and I spent more than six weeks in

a house only two doors from that of the *Corregidor* who was trying to arrest me. More than once I saw him pass by, from behind the shutter. At last I recovered, but I had thought a great deal, on my bed of pain, and I had planned to change my way of life. I suggested to Carmen that we should leave Spain, and seek an honest livelihood in the New World. She laughed in my face.

"'We were not born to plant cabbages,' she cried. 'Our fate is to live *payllos*! Listen: I've arranged a business with Nathan Ben-Joseph at Gibraltar. He has cotton stuffs that he can not get through till you come to fetch them. He knows you're alive, and reckons upon you. What would our Gibraltar correspondents say if you failed them?'

"I let myself be persuaded, and took up my vile trade once more.

"While I was hiding at Granada there were bull-fights there, to which Carmen went. When she came back she talked a great deal about a skilful *picador* of the name of Lucas. She knew the name of his horse, and how much his embroidered jacket had cost him. I paid no attention to this; but a few days later, Juanito, the only one of my comrades who was left, told me he had seen Carmen with Lucas in a shop in the Zacatin. Then I began to feel alarmed. I asked Carmen how and why she had made the *picador's* acquaintance.

"'He's a man out of whom we may be able to get something,' said she. 'A noisy stream has either water

in it or pebbles.* He has earned twelve hundred reals at the bull-fights. It must be one of two things: we must either have his money, or else, as he is a good rider and a plucky fellow, we can enrol him in our gang. We have lost such an one and such an one; you'll have to replace them. Take this man with you!'

"'I want neither his money nor himself,' I replied, 'and I forbid you to speak to him.'

"'Beware!' she retorted. 'If any one defies me to do a thing, it's very quickly done.'

"Luckily the *picador* departed to Malaga, and I set about passing in the Jew's cotton stuffs. This expedition gave me a great deal to do, and Carmen as well. I forgot Lucas, and perhaps she forgot him too—for the moment, at all events. It was just about that time, sir, that I met you, first at Montilla, and then afterward at Cordova. I won't talk about that last interview. You know more about it, perhaps, than I do. Carmen stole your watch from you, she wanted to have your money besides, and especially that ring I see on your finger, and which she declared to be a magic ring, the possession of which was very important to her. We had a violent quarrel, and I struck her. She turned pale and began to cry. It was the first time I had ever seen her cry, and it affected me in the most painful manner. I begged her to forgive me, but she sulked with me for a whole day, and when I started back to Montilla she wouldn't kiss me. My heart was still very sore, when,

* *Len sos sonsi abela*
Pani o rebleudani terela.—Gipsy proverb.

three days later, she joined me with a smiling face and as merry as a lark. Everything was forgotten, and we were like a pair of honeymoon lovers. Just as we were parting she said, 'There's a *fête* at Cordova; I shall go and see it, and then I shall know what people will be coming away with money, and I can warn you.'

"I let her go. When I was alone I thought about the *fête*, and about the change in Carmen's temper. 'She must have avenged herself already,' said I to myself, 'since she was the first to make our quarrel up.' A peasant told me there was to be bull-fighting at Cordova. Then my blood began to boil, and I went off like a madman straight to the bull-ring. I had Lucas pointed out to me, and on the bench, just beside the barrier, I recognised Carmen. One glance at her was enough to turn my suspicion into certainty. When the first bull appeared Lucas began, as I had expected, to play the agreeable; he snatched the cockade off the bull and presented it to Carmen, who put it in her hair at once.*

"The bull avenged me. Lucas was knocked down, with his horse on his chest, and the bull on top of both of them. I looked for Carmen, she had disappeared from her place already. I couldn't get out of mine, and I was obliged to wait until the bull-fight was over. Then I went off to that house you already know, and

* *La divisa.* A knot of ribbon, the colour of which indicates the pasturage from which each bull comes. This knot of ribbon is fastened into the bull's hide with a sort of hook, and it is considered the very height of gallantry to snatch it off the living beast and present it to a woman.

waited there quietly all that evening and part of the night. Toward two o'clock in the morning Carmen came back, and was rather surprised to see me.

"'Come with me,' said I.

"'Very well,' said she, 'let's be off.'

"I went and got my horse, and took her up behind me, and we travelled all the rest of the night without saying a word to each other. When daylight came we stopped at a lonely inn, not far from a little hermitage. There I said to Carmen:

"'Listen—I forget everything, I won't mention anything to you. But swear one thing to me—that you'll come with me to America, and live there quietly!'

"'No,' said she, in a sulky voice, 'I won't go to America—I am very well here.'

"'That's because you're near Lucas. But be very sure that even if he gets well now, he won't make old bones. And, indeed, why should I quarrel with him? I'm tired of killing all your lovers; I'll kill you this time.'

"She looked at me steadily with her wild eyes, and then she said:

"'I've always thought you would kill me. The very first time I saw you I had just met a priest at the door of my house. And to-night, as we were going out of Cordova, didn't you see anything? A hare ran across the road between your horse's feet. It is fate.'

"'Carmencita,' I asked, 'don't you love me any more?'

"She gave me no answer, she was sitting cross-legged on a mat, making marks on the ground with her finger.

"'Let us change our life, Carmen,' said I imploringly. 'Let us go away and live somewhere where we shall never be parted. You know we have a hundred and twenty gold ounces buried under an oak not far from here, and then we have more money with Ben-Joseph the Jew.'

"She began to smile, and then she said, 'Me first, and then you. I know it will happen like that.'

"'Think about it,' said I. 'I've come to the end of my patience and my courage. Make up your mind—or else I must make up mine.'

"I left her alone and walked toward the hermitage. I found the hermit praying. I waited till his prayer was finished. I longed to pray myself, but I couldn't. When he rose up from his knees I went to him.

"'Father,' I said, 'will you pray for some one who is in great danger?'

"'I pray for every one who is afflicted,' he replied.

"'Can you say a mass for a soul which is perhaps about to go into the presence of its Maker?'

"'Yes,' he answered, looking hard at me.

"And as there was something strange about me, he tried to make me talk.

"'It seems to me I have seen you somewhere,' said he.

"I laid a piastre on his bench.

"'When shall you say the mass?' said I.

"'In half an hour. The son of the innkeeper yonder is coming to serve it. Tell me, young man, haven't you something on your conscience that is tormenting you? Will you listen to a Christian's counsel?'

"I could hardly restrain my tears. I told him I would come back, and hurried away. I went and lay down on the grass until I heard the bell. Then I went back to the chapel, but I stayed outside it. When he had said the mass, I went back to the *venta.* I was hoping Carmen would have fled. She could have taken my horse and ridden away. But I found her there still. She did not choose that any one should say I had frightened her. While I had been away she had unfastened the hem of her gown and taken out the lead that weighted it; and now she was sitting before a table, looking into a bowl of water into which she had just thrown the lead she had melted. She was so busy with her spells that at first she didn't notice my return. Sometimes she would take out a bit of lead and turn it round every way with a melancholy look. Sometimes she would sing one of those magic songs, which invoke the help of Maria Padella, Don Pedro's mistress, who is said to have been the *Bari Crallisa*—the great gipsy queen.*

"'Carmen,' I said to her, 'will you come with me?' She rose, threw away her wooden bowl, and put

* Maria Padella was accused of having bewitched Don Pedro. According to one popular tradition she presented Queen Blanche of Bourbon with a golden girdle which, in the eyes of the bewitched king, took on the appearance of a living snake. Hence the repugnance he always showed toward that unhappy princess.

her mantilla over her head ready to start. My horse was led up, she mounted behind me, and we rode away.

"After we had gone a little distance I said to her, 'So, my Carmen, you are quite ready to follow me, isn't that so?'

"She answered, 'Yes, I'll follow you, even to death —but I won't live with you any more.'

"We had reached a lonely gorge. I stopped my horse.

"'Is this the place?' she said.

"And with a spring she reached the ground. She took off her mantilla and threw it at her feet, and stood motionless, with one hand on her hip, looking at me steadily.

"'You mean to kill me, I see that well,' said she. 'It is fate. But you'll never make me give in.'

"I said to her: 'Be rational, I implore you; listen to me. All the past is forgotten. Yet you know it is you who have been my ruin—it is because of you that I am a robber and a murderer. Carmen, my Carmen, let me save you, and save myself with you.'

"'José,' she answered, 'what you ask is impossible. I don't love you any more. You love me still, and that is why you want to kill me. If I liked, I might tell you some other lie, but I don't choose to give myself the trouble. Everything is over between us two. You are my *rom*, and you have the right to kill your *romi*, but Carmen will always be free. A *calli* she was born, and a *calli* she'll die.'

"'Then, you love Lucas?' I asked.

"'Yes, I have loved him—as I loved you—for an instant—less than I loved you, perhaps. But now I don't love anything, and I hate myself for ever having loved you.'

"I cast myself at her feet, I seized her hands, I watered them with my tears, I reminded her of all the happy moments we had spent together, I offered to continue my brigand's life, if that would please her. Everything, sir, everything—I offered her everything if she would only love me again.

"She said:

"'Love you again? That's not possible! Live with you? I will not do it!'

"I was wild with fury. I drew my knife, I would have had her look frightened, and sue for mercy—but that woman was a demon.

"I cried, 'For the last time I ask you, Will you stay with me?'

"'No! no! no!' she said, and she stamped her foot.

"Then she pulled a ring I had given her off her finger, and cast it into the brushwood.

"I struck her twice over—I had taken Garcia's knife, because I had broken my own. At the second thrust she fell without a sound. It seems to me that I can still see her great black eyes staring at me. Then they grew dim and the lids closed.

"For a good hour I lay there prostrate beside her corpse. Then I recollected that Carmen had often told me that she would like to lie buried in a wood. I dug

a grave for her with my knife and laid her in it. I hunted about a long time for her ring, and I found it at last. I put it into the grave beside her, with a little cross—perhaps I did wrong. Then I got upon my horse, galloped to Cordova, and gave myself up at the nearest guard-room. I told them I had killed Carmen, but I would not tell them where her body was. That hermit was a holy man! He prayed for her—he said a mass for her soul. Poor child! it's the *calle* who are to blame for having brought her up as they did."

CHAPTER IV

SPAIN is one of the countries in which those nomads, scattered all over Europe, and known as Bohemians, Gitanas, Gipsies, Zigeuner, and so forth, are now to be found in the greatest numbers. Most of these people live, or rather wander hither and thither, in the southern and eastern provinces of Spain, in Andalusia, and Estramadura, in the kingdom of Murcia. There are a great many of them in Catalonia. These last frequently cross over into France and are to be seen at all our southern fairs. The men generally call themselves grooms, horse doctors, mule-clippers; to these trades they add the mending of saucepans and brass utensils, not to mention smuggling and other illicit practices. The women tell fortunes, beg, and sell all sorts of drugs, some of which are innocent, while some are not. The physical characteristics of the gipsies are more easily distinguished than described, and when you have known one, you should be able to recognise a member of the race among a thousand other men. It is by their physiognomy and expression, especially, that they differ from the other inhabitants of the same country. Their complexion is exceedingly swarthy, always darker than that of the race among whom they live. Hence the name of

calé (blacks) which they frequently apply to themselves.* Their eyes, set with a decided slant, are large, very black, and shaded by long and heavy lashes. Their glance can only be compared to that of a wild creature. It is full at once of boldness and shyness, and in this respect their eyes are a fair indication of their national character, which is cunning, bold, but with " the natural fear of blows," like Panurge. Most of the men are strapping fellows, slight and active. I don't think I ever saw a gipsy who had grown fat. In Germany the gipsy women are often very pretty; but beauty is very uncommon among the Spanish gitanas. When very young, they may pass as being attractive in their ugliness, but once they have reached motherhood, they become absolutely repulsive. The filthiness of both sexes is incredible, and no one who has not seen a gipsy matron's hair can form any conception of what it is, not even if he conjures up the roughest, the greasiest, and the dustiest heads imaginable. In some of the large Andalusian towns certain of the gipsy girls, somewhat better looking than their fellows, will take more care of their personal appearance. These go out and earn money by performing dances strongly resembling those forbidden at our public balls in carnival time. An English missionary, Mr. Borrow, the author of two very interesting works on the Spanish gipsies, whom he un-

* It has struck me that the German gipsies, though they thoroughly understand the word *cale*, do not care to be called by that name. Among themselves they always use the designation *Romané tchavé*.

dertook to convert on behalf of the Bible Society, declares there is no instance of any gitana showing the smallest weakness for a man not belonging to her own race. The praise he bestows upon their chastity strikes me as being exceedingly exaggerated. In the first place, the great majority are in the position of the ugly woman described by Ovid, "*Casta quam nemo rogavit.*" As for the pretty ones, they are, like all Spanish women, very fastidious in choosing their lovers. Their fancy must be taken, and their favour must be earned. Mr. Borrow quotes, in proof of their virtue, one trait which does honour to his own, and especially to his simplicity: he declares that an immoral man of his acquaintance offered several gold ounces to a pretty gitana, and offered them in vain. An Andalusian, to whom I retailed this anecdote, asserted that the immoral man in question would have been far more successful if he had shown the girl two or three piastres, and that to offer gold ounces to a gipsy was as poor a method of persuasion as to promise a couple of millions to a tavern wench. However that may be, it is certain that the gitana shows the most extraordinary devotion to her husband. There is no danger and no suffering she will not brave, to help him in his need. One of the names which the gipsies apply to themselves, *Romé*, or "the married couple," seems to me a proof of their racial respect for the married state. Speaking generally, it may be asserted that their chief virtue is their patriotism—if we may thus describe the fidelity they observe in all their relations with persons of the same origin as

their own, their readiness to help one another, and the inviolable secrecy which they keep for each other's benefit, in all compromising matters. And indeed something of the same sort may be noticed in all mysterious associations which are beyond the pale of the law.

Some months ago, I paid a visit to a gipsy tribe in the Vosges country. In the hut of an old woman, the oldest member of the tribe, I found a gipsy, in no way related to the family, who was sick of a mortal disease. The man had left a hospital, where he was well cared for, so that he might die among his own people. For thirteen weeks he had been lying in bed in their encampment, and receiving far better treatment than any of the sons and sons-in-law who shared his shelter. He had a good bed made of straw and moss, and sheets that were tolerably white, whereas all the rest of the family, which numbered eleven persons, slept on planks three feet long. So much for their hospitality. This very same woman, humane as was her treatment of her guest, said to me constantly before the sick man: "*Singo, singo, homte hi mulo.*" "Soon, soon he must die!" After all, these people live such miserable lives, that a reference to the approach of death can have no terrors for them.

One remarkable feature in the gipsy character is their indifference about religion. Not that they are strong-minded or sceptical. They have never made any profession of atheism. Far from that, indeed, the religion of the country which they inhabit is always theirs; but they change their religion when they change the

country of their residence. They are equally free from the superstitions which replace religious feeling in the minds of the vulgar. How, indeed, can superstition exist among a race which, as a rule, makes its livelihood out of the credulity of others? Nevertheless, I have remarked a particular horror of touching a corpse among the Spanish gipsies. Very few of these could be induced to carry a dead man to his grave, even if they were paid for it.

I have said that most gipsy women undertake to tell fortunes. They do this very successfully. But they find a much greater source of profit in the sale of charms and love-philters. Not only do they supply toads' claws to hold fickle hearts, and powdered loadstone to kindle love in cold ones, but if necessity arises, they can use mighty incantations, which force the devil to lend them his aid. Last year the following story was related to me by a Spanish lady. She was walking one day along the Callé d'Alcala, feeling very sad and anxious. A gipsy woman who was squatting on the pavement called out to her, "My pretty lady, your lover has played you false!" (It was quite true.) "Shall I get him back for you?" My readers will imagine with what joy the proposal was accepted, and how complete was the confidence inspired by a person who could thus guess the inmost secrets of the heart. As it would have been impossible to proceed to perform the operations of magic in the most crowded street in Madrid, a meeting was arranged for the next day. "Nothing will be easier than to bring back the faithless one to your feet!"

said the gitana. "Do you happen to have a handkerchief, a scarf, or a mantilla, that he gave you?" A silken scarf was handed her. "Now sew a piastre into one corner of the scarf with crimson silk—sew half a piastre into another corner—sew a peseta here—and a two-real piece there; then, in the middle you must sew a gold coin—a doubloon would be best." The doubloon and all the other coins were duly sewn in. "Now give me the scarf, and I'll take it to the Campo Santo when midnight strikes. You come along with me, if you want to see a fine piece of witchcraft. I promise you shall see the man you love to-morrow!" The gipsy departed alone for the Campo Santo, since my Spanish friend was too much afraid of witchcraft to go there with her. I leave my readers to guess whether my poor forsaken lady ever saw her lover, or her scarf, again.

In spite of their poverty and the sort of aversion they inspire, the gipsies are treated with a certain amount of consideration by the more ignorant folk, and they are very proud of it. They feel themselves to be a superior race as regards intelligence, and they heartily despise the people whose hospitality they enjoy. "These Gentiles are so stupid," said one of the Vosges gipsies to me, "that there is no credit in taking them in. The other day a peasant woman called out to me in the street. I went into her house. Her stove smoked and she asked me to give her a charm to cure it. First of all I made her give me a good bit of bacon, and then I began to mumble a few words in *Romany*. 'You're a

fool,' I said, 'you were born a fool, and you'll die a fool!' When I had got near the door I said to her, in good German, 'The most certain way of keeping your stove from smoking is not to light any fire in it!' and then I took to my heels."

The history of the gipsies is still a problem. We know, indeed, that their first bands, which were few and far between, appeared in Eastern Europe towards the beginning of the fifteenth century. But nobody can tell whence they started, or why they came to Europe, and, what is still more extraordinary, no one knows how they multiplied, within a short time, and in so prodigious a fashion, and in several countries, all very remote from each other. The gipsies themselves have preserved no tradition whatsoever as to their origin, and though most of them do speak of Egypt as their original fatherland, that is only because they have adopted a very ancient fable respecting their race.

Most of the Orientalists who have studied the gipsy language believe that the cradle of the race was in India. It appears, in fact, that many of the roots and grammatical forms of the *Romany* tongue are to be found in idioms derived from the Sanskrit. As may be imagined, the gipsies, during their long wanderings, have adopted many foreign words. In every *Romany* dialect a number of Greek words appear, as, for instance *cocal* (bone), from *κόκκαλον*; *petaie* (horse-shoe), from *πέταλον*; *cafi* (nail), from *καρφί*, etc.

At the present day the gipsies have almost as many dialects as there are separate hordes of their race. Ev-

erywhere, they speak the language of the country they inhabit more easily than their own idiom, which they seldom use, except with the object of conversing freely before strangers. A comparison of the dialect of the German gipsies with that used by the Spanish gipsies, who have held no communication with each other for several centuries, reveals the existence of a great number of words common to both. But everywhere the original language is notably affected, though in different degrees, by its contact with the more cultivated languages into the use of which the nomads have been forced. German in one case and Spanish in the other have so modified the *Romany* groundwork that it would not be possible for a gipsy from the Black Forest to converse with one of his Andalusian brothers, although a few sentences on each side would suffice to convince them that each was speaking a dialect of the same language. Certain words in very frequent use are, I believe, common to every dialect. Thus, in every vocabulary which I have been able to consult, *pani* means water, *manro* means bread, *mâs* stands for meat, and *lon* for salt.

The nouns of number are almost the same in every case. The German dialect seems to me much purer than the Spanish, for it has preserved numbers of the primitive grammatical forms, whereas the Gitanos have adopted those of the Castilian tongue. Nevertheless, some words are an exception, as though to prove that the language was originally common to all. The preterite of the German dialect is formed by adding *ium*

to the imperative, which is always the root of the verb. In the Spanish *Romany* the verbs are all conjugated on the model of the first conjugation of the Castilian verbs. From *jamar*, the infinitive of "to eat," the regular conjugation should be *jamé*, "I have eaten." From *lillar*, "to take," *lillé*, "I have taken." Yet, some old gipsies say, as an exception, *jayon* and *lillon*. I am not acquainted with any other verbs which have preserved this ancient form.

While I am thus showing off my small acquaintance with the *Romany* language, I must notice a few words of French slang which our thieves have borrowed from the gipsies. From *Les Mystères de Paris* honest folk have learned that the word *chourin* means "a knife." This is pure *Romany—tchouri* is one of the words which is common to every dialect. Monsieur Vidocq calls a horse *grès*—this again is a gipsy word—*gras, gre, graste*, and *gris*. Add to this the word *romanichel*, by which the gipsies are described in Parisian slang. This is a corruption of *romané tchavé*—"gipsy lads." But a piece of etymology of which I am really proud is that of the word *frimousse*, "face," "countenance."—a word which every schoolboy uses, or did use, in my time. Note, in the first place, that Oudin, in his curious dictionary, published in 1640, wrote the word *firlimouse*. Now in *Romany*, *firla*, or *fila*, stands for "face," and has the same meaning—it is exactly the *os* of the Latins. The combination of *firlamui* was instantly understood by a genuine gipsy, and I believe it to be true to the spirit of the gipsy language.

I have surely said enough to give the readers of Carmen a favourable idea of my *Romany* studies. I will conclude with the following proverb, which comes in very appropriately: *En retudi panda nasti abela macha.* "Between closed lips no fly can pass."

END OF CARMEN

THE PORTRAITS OF PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

THE PORTRAITS OF PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE
About 1860.
After a photograph by Reutlinger.

THOUGH not very numerous, the known portraits of the author of *Carmen* and of *Colomba* are nevertheless both curious and interesting, by reason of their very diversity. Prosper Mérimée was the offspring of two artists. His father was a painter, as well as a chemist of high repute, and his mother showed distinct talent both as a painter in water-colours and oils, and as a miniaturist. Thus, from babyhood to adolescence the features of the youthful Prosper were frequently limned by the authors of his being.

We find records of many pictures or drawings, produced between his tenth and his eighteenth year, and now lost to posterity. But we still possess a picture of the child by his mother's hand, dated 1808; and this portrait of the pretty little five-year-old boy, with his bright eyes, roguish lips, and long fair curls, has struck us as well worth reproduction and preservation.

Following on this vision of a bare-armed baby in his open-necked blouse we must notice yet another *décolleté* portrait, which shows us Prosper Mérimée in feminine garb. This picture appeared at the beginning of *Le Théâtre de Clara Gazul*, a well-known literary hoax, whereby the anonymous author appeared in the guise of a woman, the pretended author of the *saynètes* published under this pseudonym. This fanciful subterfuge, which makes Mérimée appear as a Spanish lady, with uncovered shoulders, and which has remained famous among the acknowledged impositions of literary history, is not present in the later editions of the works of Clara Gazul, and the portrait lithographed by Scheffer, from a drawing by Delécluze, has become exceedingly rare.

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.
After a portrait painted by his mother.

Towards 1828 numerous portraits of Prosper Mérimée are said to have been contributed to the albums of various artists, but none of these pencil sketches have been preserved. The most important portrait of the author of *La Chronique de Charles IX*, and that which gives the clearest impression of his energetic

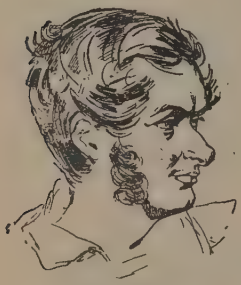
countenance, and most definitely fixes his general aspect as he appeared at the age of eight-and-twenty, is Achille Déveria's broadly treated lithograph, of which one, and the only, proof was ultimately discovered in one of the painter's portfolios, with the legend "Mérimé" (*sic*) pencilled on its lower margin. It is a reproduction of this picture, sketched by Déveria on to the lithographic stone, and of which, no doubt, but the one trial proof was drawn, which figures in heliogravure at the commencement of the present volume. It represents Mérimée as we delight to fancy him, scornful and severe of face, with cold, deep-searching eyes: the man who proved so cavalier a lover to Mme. George Sand, a dandy and a gallant, after his own fashion.

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE EN FEMME.
En frontispiece de *l'Edition Originale du Théâtre de Clara Gazul.*

David d'Angers, by whom the faces of all his most illustrious contemporaries were reproduced in medallions, either of marble or of bronze, did not omit to secure, towards 1828, a profile in high relief of Mérimée's stern features. Examples of this medallion are now unattainable. There are only three in existence. One was given by David to Goethe, when he went to Weimar, in 1829, to model a bust of the author of *Faust*; another passed into the hands of David's heirs, and a third

was in Mérimée's own possession. This portrait was never disseminated by means of reproductions or of Colla's reductions. But it is engraved in *L'Oeuvre de David d Angers.*

Another portrait of Mérimée, at the age of thirty-two or thereabouts, and which, from the artistic point of view, stands next in worth and quality to Déveria's lithograph, is here reproduced, after a delightful water-colour by an unknown hand. In a letter to a friend, written about 1835, in which he regrets not being able to send him a cast of David's medallion, Mérimée thus adverts to this sketch: "I will send you another picture, which is less monumental, but a better likeness. It is a water-colour by an English artist."

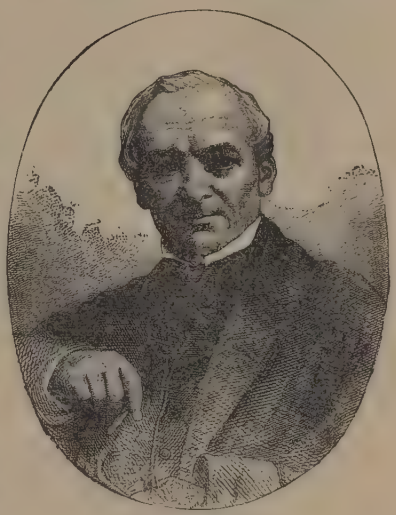


PROSPER MÉRIMÉE
In 1835.
After a water-colour by an anonymous English artist.

Who was this artist? All is mystery. This delicately tinted water-colour, with neither date nor signature, which shows us our author as the possessor of an aristocratic and elegant profile, was given by Mérimée to a re ative, Mme. Dubois-Fresnel, together with the autograph manuscript of *Mateo Falcone.* A reproduction consisting of a few copies, was published toward 1876. This portrait is an astonishing and delightful piece of work. Unless it flatters Mérimée, it makes us realize that he must have been a brilliant personage indeed, and that Mme.

Récamier may very well have desired to have him appointed Secretary to the Embassy in London, in 1829.

From this period onward, such portraits of Mérimée as time has bequeathed to us only depict the Academician, the man who has made his way, the habitual guest at the Tuileries. The only one that retains some beauty of expression is that published in *L'Artiste*, which represents the friend of Stendhal full face, close shaven, austere of countenance, a cigarette between his fingers, in the fulness of his mature manhood. With his great black eyes and curling hair clustered upon his temples, this Mérimée wears a fine expression of calm serenity, like the radiance shed by a superior intellect.



PROSPER MÉRIMÉE
About 1850.
After a steel engraving by Nargeot, published in *L'Artiste*.

The various photographs of Mérimée taken from 1860 up to the closing days of his life are less attractive. The old man's features seem hardened by the process. This is the effect produced by Reutlinger's portrait taken in 1860, which appears at the opening

of this Not , and by that other which represents the Empress Eugénie's old friend with his shirt-collar in the old style, and a face which is a sort of evocation of a statue of Berryer — a social type alike ungraceful and out of date.

MÉRIMÉE
About 1866.
After an unpublished photograph, the property of Mme. Ratazzi.

But indeed everything that photography bequeathes to us is at once comic and melancholy, old-fashioned, and hideous. Photography, which is the faithful expression of an image by light, never produces the same impression of life as does the artist's sketch, the oil painting, or the sculptor's work. The process invented by Daguerre and his successors has worked a great mischief to the famous men of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Mérimée fought shy of the photographers, and he was right. Lithography, as it was practised by Déveria, could immortalize an expressive countenance in far nobler fashion than the most perfect of enamelled photographs. Mérimée, himself a portraitist and caricaturist, who left behind him a number of amusing pen-and-ink sketches of his colleagues at the Academy, beginning with Victor Hugo himself, was well aware that no instantaneous exposure of a photo-

graphic film can snatch a man's peculiar feature, his intellectual composition, the characteristics of his soul, and render them with the same effect as that attained by the simple pencil-stroke of the gifted draughtsman.

OCTAVE UZANNE.